NATION

HC upholds Mumbai college's ban on hijab

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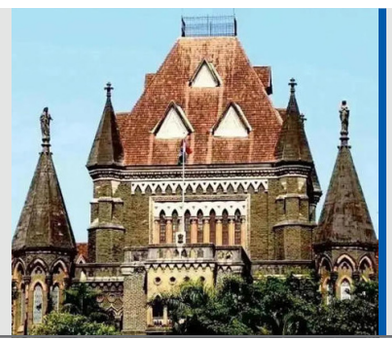

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Sensex-Nifty hit all-time high as session closes in green

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T20 WORLD CUP: India eyes revenge against England in semis

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سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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India exports rockets, explosives to Israel: Report

On 15 May morning, the cargo vessel Borkum stopped off the Spanish coast, a short distance from Cartagena. At the port, protesters waved Palestinian flags and called on authorities to inspect the ship based on suspicions that it carried weapons bound for Israel.

Leftist members of the European Parliament sent a letter to Spanish President Pedro Sánchez requesting that the ship be prevented from docking.

Before the Spanish government could take a stand, the Borkum cancelled its planned stopover and continued to the Slovenian port of Koper.

According to documents seen by Al Jazeera, the ship contained explosives loaded in India and was en route to Israel's port of Ashdod, some 30km from the Gaza Strip. Marine tracking sites show it departed Chennai on 2 April and circumnavigated Africa to avoid transiting through the Red Sea, where Yemen's Houthis have been attacking vessels in reprisal for Israel's war. The identification codes specified in the documentation, obtained unofficially by the Solidarity Network Against the Palestinian Occupation, suggest the Borkum contained 20 tonnes of rocket engines, 12.5 tonnes of rockets with explosive charges, 1,500kg (3,300 pounds) of explosive substances and 740kg (1,630 pounds) of charges and propellants for cannons.

PHOTO: AL JAZEERA

A paragraph on confidentiality specified that all employees were mandated that "under no circumstances" were they to name IMI Systems or Israel. IMI Systems, a defence firm, was bought by Elbit Systems, Israel's largest weapons manufacturer, in 2018.

A second cargo ship that had departed India was denied entry on 21 May to the port of Cartagena. Spanish newspaper El Pais reported that the Marianne Danica left from Chennai and was en route to Israel's port of Haifa with 27 tonnes of explosives. Minister of Foreign Affairs Jose Manuel Albares confirmed in a news conference that the vessel was denied entry on the grounds that it was shipping military cargo to Israel.

These incidents add to mounting evidence that weapon parts from India, a country that has long advocated dialogue over military action in resolving conflicts, are quietly making their way to Israel, including during the ongoing months-long war in Gaza. A lack of transparency on India's transfers helps them slip under the radar, say analysts.

—Courtesy, Al Jazeera

>>>Continued on Page 3

Rains: Dakshina Kannada on red alert, schools shut

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

Schools in Dakshina Kannada to be closed today as Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC) and Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) issues red alert, on Tuesday. This decision to close schools comes as a precautionary measure to ensure the safety of students and staff during the anticipated severe weather conditions. IMD forecasts isolated heavy to very heavy rain with sustained winds of 30-40 kms per hour along the coast on Thursday. They also predicted heavy to very heavy rain in coastal districts from 28 June to 30 June.

—Salar News

Kerala man dies as train upper berth falls on him

HYDERABAD, 26 JUNE

A 60-year-old man from Kerala succumbed to injuries at a hospital in Hyderabad after he sustained severe injuries as the upper berth seat in the train he is travelling fell on him due to improper chaining. According to Government Railway Police (GRP), The incident took place on 16 June when Ali Khan CK from Kerala was travelling to Agra along with his friend in the lower berth of the sleeper coach of the train number 12645 Ernakulam-Hazrat Nizamuddin Millennium Superfast Express. A GRP official said that the upper berth fell on the man when the train was passing through the Warangal district of Telangana.

—Salar News

Flipkart launches UPI app Super.Money

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Flipkart has launched its own Unified Payment Interface (UPI) app called Super.Money. It will be initially available to only 1 lakh users and can be downloaded on Google Play Store. It lists Axis Bank and IndusInd Bank as banking partners. It will offer 5% cashback on transactions. This comes a year after Flipkart separated from WalMart-backed fintech PhonePe. Last July, flipkart and Axis Bank partnered up to provide loans up to Rs 5 lakh.*—Salar News*

On day 1, LS Speaker Birla triggers Emergency row

Birla termed imposition of Emergency as attack on Constitution

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

NDA nominee Om Birla was elected as Lok Sabha speaker on Wednesday after a motion moved by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was adopted through voice vote, capping intense debate on the issue with Opposition in a rare move proposing its own candidate.

Birla read out a resolution condemning the imposition of the Emergency and termed the decision by then prime minister Indira Gandhi an attack on the Constitution and called for 2-minute silence. His remark triggered a wave of protests by Opposition. The House was adjourned after his remarks.

Pro-tem Speaker Bhartruhari Mahtab made the announcement after the Opposition, which had forwarded the name of eight-term Congress MP Kodikunnil Suresh as its candidate, did not press for votes to the motion.

With this, Birla, BJP's MP from Kota, gets a second consecutive term in the chair, the fifth time that a speaker will serve beyond the tenure of one Lok Sabha. It is also amongst the few occasions that an election became necessary for a post conventionally decided by consensus. "I announce Om Birla elected as the speaker," Mahtab said. Soon after, Modi and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju went to Birla's seat in the front row of the treasury benches to escort him to the chair. Congress leader and Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi also joined them. Gandhi greeted Birla and also shook hands with the Prime Minister.

Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi shakes hand with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during 18th Lok Sabha, in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

After that, Modi, Gandhi and Rijiju escorted Birla to the chair where Mahtab welcomed him saying, "It is your chair, please occupy." In his address, the first in the 18th Lok Sabha, Modi said Birla's work as a parliamentarian should be an inspiration for new Lok Sabha members. Congratulating Birla on his election, Gandhi said he hoped the Opposition would be allowed to raise the voice of people in the House.

PHOTO: PTI

> **This House condemns the imposition of Emergency in 1975. We commend the steadfast determination of all those who resisted the Emergency, and upheld the responsibility in safeguarding India's democracy**
>
> -Om Birla, Lok Sabha Speaker

He also said Opposition wanted the House to function "often and well" and added that it was very important that cooperation happens with trust. Several Opposition leaders, including Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, echoed him. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

CORRUPTION CASE

CBI arrests Arvind Kejriwal, sends him to 3-day custody

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

A Delhi court on Wednesday sent the state Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to the Central Bureau of Investigation's (CBI) custody for three days after the central agency arrested him in a corruption case related to the alleged excise scam.

Special Judge Amitabh Rawat passed the order on an application moved by the CBI, which formally arrested Kejriwal after obtaining permission from the court.

The application seeking Kejriwal's arrest was moved by the CBI after the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader was produced before the court from the Tihar jail, where he was lodged in judicial custody in a money-laundering case linked to the excise "scam" being probed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

Kejriwal will remain in the CBI's custody until his custodial interrogation in the corruption case comes to an end, which can go on for a maximum of 15 days. The court had, on 19 June, extended Kejriwal's judicial custody in the money-laundering case till 3 July.

"It is being run in the media through CBI sources that I have a statement putting the entire blame on (former Delhi deputy chief minister) Manish Sisodia. I have not given any such statement that Sisodia or anyone else is guilty. I have said Sisodia is innocent, the AAP is innocent, I am innocent," Kejriwal told the court.

Kejriwal's lawyer opposed the CBI's plea seeking his custody, describing the agency's remand application as "totally vague". *—PTI*

Arvind Kejriwal **PHOTO: PTI**

> **The whole system is trying to ensure that the man does not come out of jail. This is not law. This is dictatorship, this is emergency**
>
> -Sunita Kejriwal, Wife of Arvind Kejriwal

Sunita Kejriwal **PHOTO: PTI**

FREE MAN'S HUG

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange hugs his wife Stella Assange as a free man after he was released from the UK court, at Sydney airport on Wednesday **PHOTO: @STELLA_ASSANGE** **>>>More on Page 6**

Airtel spends Rs 6,856 cr in India's spectrum auctions

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

India's spectrum auctions sold 141.4 MHz radiowaves worth Rs 11,340.78 crore, with Bharti Airtel emerging as the top buyer with airwaves worth Rs 6,856.76 crore.

Additionally Bharti Hexacom, a subsidiary of the telecom firm, has acquired 15 MHz with an outlay of Rs 1,001 crore, Bharti Airtel said in a statement. With this purchase, Bharti Airtel will continue to enjoy the largest mid-band spectrum pool in the country.

India's spectrum auction concluded within a few hours of bidding on Day 2, with telcos buying about Rs 11,340 crore worth of radio waves in all, which is just 12 per cent of the Rs 96,238 crore minimum value that government had estimated for the spectrum on offer. Reliance Jio bagged spectrum worth Rs 973.62 crore while debt-ridden telecom operator Vodafone Idea bought spectrum worth Rs 3,510 crore. Besides renewing 900 megahertz spectrum in UP West and West Bengal, the company enhanced its 900 MHz spectrum holding in seven circles, namely Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Punjab, Rajasthan, UP East and Kolkata. VIL has plans to invest up to Rs 55,000 crore over the next three years with focus on expanding and strengthening 4G coverage. *—PTI*

4 KILLED IN WALL COLLAPSE IN M'LURU

MANGALURU, 26 JUNE

Four members of a family died when a compound wall of the neighbouring property collapsed on their dwelling in Kuttaru Madaninagar village here on Wednesday, officials said. The deceased have been identified as Yasir, 45, wife Mariyamma, 40 and their children, Riyan and Rifan. The incident occurred at 6.30 am, they said adding the compound wall of the neighboring house gave way following heavy rains on Tuesday night. According to the fire department, the soil underneath had loosened up and the wall collapsed on the adjacent house. Locals said, the wall of the neighbour was built very close to the house of the victim Yasir and there were frequent arguments between them over the wall. Rescue workers rushed to the spot and dug out the bodies. *—Salar News with Agency*

In 2023, India gets $120B in remittances, max from US

WASHINGTON, 26 JUNE

India received USD 120 billion in remittances in 2023, which is almost twice of USD 66 billion received by Mexico during the same period, the World Bank said in a report released on Wednesday.

China (USD 50 billion), the Philippines (USD 39 billion), and Pakistan (USD 27 billion) figure in top five countries list of remittances recipients as released by the World Bank, according to which remittances in 2023 after a period of strong growth during 2021-2022, officially recorded remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) moderated in 2023, reaching an estimated USD 656 billion.

"Growing at 7.5 per cent, remittance flows to India touched USD 120 billion in 2023, reflecting the benefits of a deceleration in inflation and strong labour markets in the United States, the largest destination for India's skilled migrants, and other OECD destinations, as well as positive demand for skilled and less-skilled workers in the GCC countries (which, together, are the second largest destination for Indian migrants)," the World Bank said.

While the same external demand conditions could have favoured remittance flows to Pakistan, weak internal conditions due to a balance of payments crisis and economic difficulties triggered remittances to plummet 12 per cent to USD 27 billion in 2023 compared with more than USD 30 billion in 2022, it said.

The World Bank said remittances to India are forecasted to grow at 3.7 per cent to USD 124 billion in 2024, and at four per cent to reach USD 129 billion in 2025. *—PTI*

SOUTH INDIA'S 1ST

BNP launches leopard safari

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre inaugurated South India's first and largest leopard safari, in Bannerghatta Biological Park, on Tuesday. The project adhering to Central Zoo Authority guidelines costs around Rs. 4.5 crore.

The safari is open for the public on all days except Tuesdays. While the general entry fees remains unchanged, additional safari fees will be applicable.

Speaking to **Salar News**, AV Surya Sen, Executive Director of BBP, said "We currently have 14 leopards that were rescued from the agricultural lands, and raised from when they were cubs. Out of these eight of them have been released in the safari enclosures. The rest of them have yet to be introduced as they are still young to be in and around the safari areas."

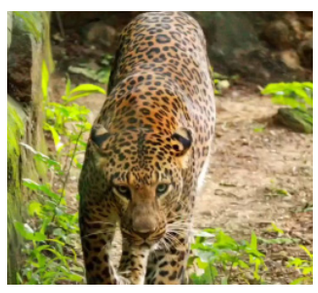


PHOTO: SALAR

Visitors can choose between a special AC bus and a regular bus for the safari. For adults the bus ticket costs Rs 500 for an AC bus and Rs 300 for a regular bus. For children aged 6 to 12 years, the ticket costs is Rs 130 and for senior citizens the costs is Rs 260.

The new safari which features 49 acres of enclosure set in semi-deciduous forest, adds to its array of wildlife attraction.

Khandre emphasised the importance of educating visitors on the ecological significance of various tree species, urging them to plant saplings at home that are given at the park for discounted rates.

In addition to the leopard safari, BBP announced several new developments like the skywalk that will connect the zoo to the butterfly park, five new animal enclosures for emus and rheas, hunting cheetahs, hamadryas and olive baboons, and Indian grey wolves, and a new baby elephant feeding centre.

—Salar News

3 suspected JeM terrorists gunned down in J&K

BHADERWAH/JAMMU, 26 JUNE

Three terrorists, suspected to be affiliated with the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) outfit, were killed in a gunfight that lasted for more than six hours in a forest area in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district on Wednesday

According to police, a cop was also injured in the gunfight that broke out in Bajaad village in the Gandoh area around 9.50 am amid an intensified cordon-and-search operation launched by the police, Army and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), following twin terrorist attacks in the hill district on 11 June and 12, the officials added.

After the twin attacks, the security forces intensified their anti-terrorist operations and announced a cash reward of Rs 5 lakh each on giving information about four Pakistani terrorists believed to have infiltrated into the district. During an operation in a village in Sinoo panchayat, the forces came under heavy fire from the terrorists hiding in a "dhok" (mud house) on a slope, the officials said, adding that one ultra was killed in the retaliatory fire after he came out and started firing.

Heavy gunfire and explosions rattled the village as two more terrorists were eliminated by the security forces, the officials said, adding that a huge quantity of arms and ammunition, including two M4 carbines and an AK-series assault rifle, were seized.

On 9 June, terrorists struck a bus carrying pilgrims returning from the Shiv Khori temple in Reasi district, killing nine people, including the driver and the conductor of the vehicle, and injuring 41. *—PTI*

Nanjangud temple gets Rs 1.69 cr donations

MYSURU, 26 JUNE

Sri Nanjundeswara Temple, Nanjangud opened 35 donation boxes and received donations worth Rs 1.69 crore in cash and 134 grams of gold, 2.3 kg of silver, and 23 foreign currency notes from devotees in a month.

The counting process of boxes was done with the presence of temple staffs, Bank of Baroda employees, and over a hundred women members from local self-help groups. Jagadish Kumar, the temple's Executive Officer; Tahsildar Vidyulata; Assistant Executive Officer Satish; Accounts Officer Gurumalaia, and TK Nayak, the Manager of Bank of Baroda, were the officials present to oversee the process. The consistent and generous offerings underscore the temple's importance as a spiritual centre and its ability to attract devotees from far and wide. Sri Nanjundeswara Temple, known for its architectural beauty and religious significance, continues to be a major pilgrimage site in Karnataka. These substantial donations are expected to contribute to the temple's upkeep, charitable activities, and various religious and cultural programs.

—Salar News

Posspole, KMB sign MoU for maritime ecosystem growth

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

Posspole Private Limited, a dynamic 360-degree ecosystem for high-tech products, market access and manufacturing has announced the commencement of its strategic partnership with the Karnataka Maritime Board to enhance and develop the maritime ecosystem in the state, the company said on Wednesday. KMB, is a statutory body set up by the Government of Karnataka to facilitate the rapid development and management of ports, inland waterways, islands, and the coastal region in the State. This association between KMB and Posspole will enable research and development of novel technology solutions to maritime issues and problems faced by Karnataka, Jayaram Raipura, CEO of Karnataka Maritime Board said. According to the company, key areas to focus from MoU includes -- port development and automation, infrastructure enhancement, automation integration, smart systems installation, environmental conservation and restoration, coral reef restoration, sustainable practices implementation, research and monitoring, technology development and innovation among others.

—PTI

Hubballi airport receives hoax bomb threat

HUBBALLI, 26 JUNE

A day after Kalaburagi airport staff received a bomb threat via email, on Tuesday, Hubballi airport Director Rupesh Kumar Sripada received a hoax bomb threat from email address LongLivepalestine@dnmx.org. The message contained explicit threats, such as "We will destroy you, we throw it in the fire, you will die of suffocation and you thought there was no answer for all the bad things you did." Upon receiving the threatening communication, Director Sripada immediately informed terminal in-charge Pratapa. Following standard protocol, they alerted several security agencies including Chief Airport Security Officer (CASO), Intelligence Bureau (IB), and Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad (BDDS). As per aviation security rules, necessary precautionary measures were swiftly implemented at the airport. The police have taken the threat seriously and are working to trace the origin of the email. Gokul Road police has launched an investigation. *—Salar News*

Child trafficking racket busted in Tumakuru, 7 held

5 children who were sold to childless couples rescued

TUMAKURU, 26 JUNE

The Tumakuru Police on Wednesday busted a child trafficking racket, arresting seven people and rescuing five children who were allegedly sold by the accused to childless couples.

A used car, Rs 50,000 cash and four mobile phones have been seized from the accused.

The matter came to light after a complaint was filed by a couple on 9 June alleging that their 11-month-old infant was allegedly kidnapped by some miscreants at night while they were asleep at their home in Gubbi taluk. Acting on a tip off, the police arrested the accused Ramakrishna, 53 and Hanamantha Raju, 45 who allegedly kidnapped the infant.

Based on information provided, a third accused Mahesh UD,39 who sold the kidnapped infant to another accused, Mubarak, for Rs 1.75 lakh, was also arrested. The police also detained the 44-year-old Mubarak and rescued the 11-month-old infant.

Mahesh used to find women who got pregnant out of wedlock and illicit relationships. He then got the children from such women and sold them to childless couples for a price of Rs two-three lakh per child. Another accused Mehboob Sharif, 52 who was also involved in the racket used to run a medical facility at Huliyar and worked as a pharmacist at a Primary Health Centre. Another accused, Poornima, 39 who was a contract worker at a Primary Health Centre, and Soujanya, 48 who was a staff nurse at a hospital, allegedly cooperated in selling the infants were also held. The accused created fake birth certificates for the children they sold, police said.

"Out of the nine children sold by the accused, five children have been rescued and one was found dead. Out of the rescued, one of them has been reunited with his family while the remaining four rescued children are currently at an adoption centre on the orders of the Child Welfare Committee," Ashok KV, Superintendent of Police (Tumakuru), told PTI.

—PTI

City police released pictures of the accused in the case, on Wednesday **PHOTO: SALAR**

- The matter came to light after a complaint was filed by a couple on 9 June alleging that their 11-month-old infant was allegedly kidnapped by some miscreants at night while they were asleep at their home in Gubbi taluk in Tumakuru district

REMANDED TILL 8 JULY

City court rejects Prajwal Revanna's bail plea

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

Bengaluru court on Wednesday rejected the bail plea of former JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna, who is facing charges of rape and sexual harassment in multiple cases.

Additional City Civil and Sessions Court Judge had reserved his ruling on the plea on Monday and passed the orders today rejecting it.

Prajwal is presently in the custody of Special Investigation Team, formed to probe his alleged sex crimes.

Prajwal was remanded to judicial custody till 8 July, on Monday, but a day later was sent to SIT custody till 29 June by Magistrate court judge, after SIT sought a body warrant through Special Public Prosecutor (SPP).

Four separate cases have been registered against him, all of which are being investigated by SIT.

Prajwal had failed in his bid to retain Hassan parliamentary constituency in the recent polls.

The bail was sought in connection with the case registered in the Holenarasipura town police station in which he is accused of sexually harassing a 47-year-old former maid. He is listed as accused number two, while his father and local MLA, HD Revanna, is the primary accused.

Prajwal Revanna **PHOTO: PTI**

The cases of sexual abuse came to light after pen-drives containing explicit videos allegedly involving Prajwal Revanna were reportedly circulated in Hassan, ahead of Lok Sabha polls there on 26 April.

The second case against Prajwal Revanna was filed by Criminal Investigation Department (CID) on 1 May after a 44-year-old former member of the Hassan Zilla Panchayat accused Prajwal of repeatedly raping her.

Meanwhile, according to sources, Prajwal was taken to Holenarasipura for a "spot mahazar" (inquest) at his residence in connection with the last case registered against him.

—PTI

No hike in bus & auto fares: Transport Minister

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy said that there will be no increase in auto and bus fares on Tuesday.

This comes after the City auto union demanded a revision of auto fares, proposing Rs 40 for the first 2kms and Rs 20 for each additional km. Manju, President of Adarsha Auto and Taxi Drivers Union, told **Salar News**, "Auto and cab drivers in the City have been seeking alternatives to aggregators like Ola, Uber, and Rapido due to challenging work conditions, high fuel costs, high commissions, EMI repayments on their vehicles, and traffic congestion."

Ramalinga Reddy **PHOTO: PTI**

Nataraj Sharma, President of Federation of Karnataka State Private Transport Association told Salar News, "The fuel price has increased the burden on taxi drivers as this hike will significantly impact the commercial vehicle industry.

The government should at least consider the price hike or come up with a government based app to monitor our incomes. *—Salar News*

3 DY CMS ROW

Congress high command will have a final say: CM

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

With the demand to have three more Deputy Chief Ministers resurfacing in Karnataka, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday said the decision of the Congress high command is final. Some of the Ministers have been pitching for deputy chief minister posts to be given to leaders from Veerashaiva-Lingayat, SC/ST and minority communities.

Currently, DK Shivakumar from the Vokkaliga community is only the Deputy Chief Minister in the Siddaramaiah cabinet.

A section within the Congress is said to be of the opinion that statement by the Ministers seeking three more deputy chief ministers, was part of a plan by Siddaramaiah's camp to keep Shivakumar in check, amid talks he might seek the chief minister post after two-and-half years of this government's tenure. Co-Operation Minister KN Rajanna, Housing Minister BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan, Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi and a few others - all considered close to Siddaramaiah - earlier this week once again raised the pitch for posts.

"You people (media) put in news if someone says something. Why should I say no to people who are happy (by appearing in news)... Let anyone make any demand, the party will respond to them appropriately. Simple," Shivakumar reacted to the ministers demand. *—PTI*

CM Siddaramaiah **PHOTO: PTI**

Pre-primary class training to start in 2,786 schools

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

The State government has started early childhood care and education (ECCE) training to take place in 2,786 government schools in the State. These classes are training given to the teachers and anganwadi workers to teach pre-primary classes as the government schools gear up to upgrade anganwadis as Montessori's and integrate with both kannada and english languages with a structured curriculum.

The children will also be given uniforms,bags,shoes and books. The anganwadis will be supervised by headmasters and the overall supervision will be done by the ministry of women and child development. *—Salar News*

Price hike is for extra milk, says Siddaramaiah

NO GROWTH WITHOUT PRICE HIKE: AGRI MIN

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

Responding to the news of hike in milk prices in Karnataka, the state Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday defended the Rs two hike in 'Nandini' milk prices with additional 50 ml of milk in half-litre and one litre packets, stating that it has been done keeping in mind the interest of farmers in view of rising procurement. He reiterated that milk prices have not been increased.

The Opposition took a dig at the government as the hike in milk prices came days after the government increased fuel prices in the state.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said the move is aimed at benefiting farmers and prices should have been hiked more.

"This shows that BJP is anti-farmers. The increased amount will go to the farmers who are in distress. KMF (Karnataka Milk Federation) is a farmers' organisation, this is to benefit farmers.

According to me, prices should have been hiked more....farmers are in distress, they are selling their cattle unable to take care of them," he said.

—PTI

BELAGAVI, 26 JUNE

Agriculture Minister N Chaluvarayaswamy on Wednesday defended recent milk price hike stating that the decisions are inevitable for development, regardless of which party is in power. Chaluvarayaswamy explained that price increases are a natural consequence of development work and the need to provide subsidies and grants to farmers. He said that it's impossible for a government to carry out development without imposing taxes. He also pointed out that Karnataka's prices remain comparatively lower than those in other states.

Responding to Opposition allegations that the price hikes were intended to fund gifts for Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Chaluvarayaswamy questioned BS Yediyurappa's government record on price increases during their tenure. *—Salar News*

Railway employee arrested in drug bust at SMVT station

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

The Baiyappanahalli Railway police arrested a man and seized 32.8 kg of drugs being smuggled from Tripura to Sir Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya Terminal (SMVT) on Train Number 12504 on Wednesday.

Acting on a tip-off, the Baiyappanahalli Railway Police conducted a crackdown on narcotics. Superintendent of Police Soumyalatha SK told **Salar News**, "The accused, Dipan Das, 20, worked as a bed roller with Indian Railways on a contract basis. Two youths accompanying the accused, Suman and Biswajit, are currently absconding."

- Acting on a tip-off, police seized 32.8 kg of drugs from SMVT station

Das has been taken into custody. In a similar incident, the Kolar police arrested a 27-yearold drug dealer who was carrying 90 grams of MDMA in his vehicle. Acting on a tip-off, the Kolar police tracked him down and arrested him.

—Salar News

Acting on a tip-off, the Baiyappanahalli Railway Police conducted a crackdown on narcotics, on Wednesday **PHOTO: SALAR**

Home Minister G Parameshwara, Shivajinagar MLA Rizwan Arshad, City Police Commissioner Dayanand B at an event of Anti-Arug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on World Drug Day, in Bengaluru, on Wednesday **PHOTO: SALAR**

State police destroys Rs 42 crore worth drugs

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

The State police on this occasion launched an app called 'Drug free Karnataka' to mark the International Day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking. This app is now open to the public to report any drug peddling activities in the City. Through this app the police can track the complainant area.

The Karnataka police also destroyed Rs 42 crore and 1.5 tonne worth of drugs on Wednesday (namely marijuana and cocaine). Speaking at the event held in Kanteerava stadium G Parameshwara said, "The youth of the country are being destroyed because of drugs. When the country's youth are destroyed the whole nation is destroyed. If youths are using drugs lavishly then we don't need to have an atom bomb to destroy the nation."

At least 4,000 students from different colleges came together to create awareness campaign on drug abuse in the City. With the theme of 'Evidence is clear; invest in prevention' in February the police destroyed Rs 36 crore worth of drugs. *—Salar News*

SI in the dock for allowing Pavithra to apply make-up

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

City police have issued a notice to a woman Sub-Inspector for allowing jailed Kannada actor Darshan's friend Pavithra Gowda to apply make-up in police custody. According to police officials, on 15 June, Pavithra was taken to her residence for recording details of the crime scene in the City.

Taking time off during the searches at her residence, Pavithra was seen applying lipstick and make-up and was all smiles while climbing down the stairs at her residence along with police personnel.

The incident triggered a debate on social media about Pavithra not showing any guilt or remorse over the murder of Darshan's fan Renukaswamy.A notice has been issued to the woman sub inspector from the office of the DCP (West) and a clarification has been sought. The police have passed an order to seize two US-made pistols possessed by Darshan. *—Salar News*

1 ARRESTED

Fake doctors' network busted in Belagavi

BELAGAVI, 26 JUNE

A network of fake doctors and illegal medical practitioners has been uncovered in Belagavi district, as police arrested one on Wednesayd. The local authorities have imposed multiple raids, arrests, and penalties.

The crackdown began after the discovery of a feticide and child-selling network run by a fake doctor in Kittur. This prompted the health department to conduct extensive raids in various taluks in the district.

In Keruru village of Chikkodi taluk, a team led by District Health Officer Dr Mahesh Koni raided Dr Mulla's Clinic on 25 June. The inspection revealed that the clinic's operator, Riyaz Mulla, was a fake doctor who had only studied up to PUC level. Deputy Commissioner of Belagavi Nitesh Patil sentenced Mulla to one week in jail and imposed a fine of Rs 1 lakh.

Riyaz Mulla **PHOTO: SALAR**

Another raid, in Badakal Galli, exposed a clinic named Shiva where Dr S Devanagamvi was found dispensing ayurvedic medicine while displaying an MBBS board. The authorities issued a notice and seized the clinic. At Guru Krupa clinic in Chawata Galli officials discovered the facility was being run illegally by Dr Naveed Sheikh. Various medical equipment, including X-ray machines, were found on the premises. The clinic owner, Umesh Acharya, was issued a notice to respond within a week.

—Salar News

UP court asks RaGa to appear on 2 July in defamation case

SULTANPUR, 26 JUNE

An MP-MLA court on Wednesday asked Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to appear before it on 2 July in a defamation case filed against him for alleged objectionable remarks against Union Home Minister Amit Shah. Complaint lawyer Santosh Kumar Pandey said that a man, Ram Pratap had demanded that he be made a party in the case. Opposing the plea, Pandey said Pratap is neither a victim nor has anything to do with the matter. Gandhi's lawyer Kashi Prasad Shukla, who was present in the court, also opposed the petitioner's plea. A defamation case was filed against Gandhi in 2018 over his alleged objectionable remarks against Shah which was filed by BJP leader Vijay Mishra. *—PTI*

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Andhra cops arrest YSRCP leader who damaged EVM

NARASARAOPETA, 26 JUNE

Andhra Pradesh Police on Wednesday arrested YSRCP leader P Ramakrishna Reddy after the High Court dismissed his anticipatory bail plea in a case over his alleged attack on a TDP polling agent who questioned him for smashing an EVM. On 13 May, former Macherla MLA Ramakrishna Reddy barged into polling station number 202 in the constituency and smashed an EVM on the floor and also allegedly engaged in an altercation with "adversaries" at the polling station. The act of EVM smashing was caught on a web camera installed by Election Commission, leading to Reddy's identification with footage and documentary evidence. *—PTI*

Lalu's aide Katyal granted bail in land-for-jobs scam

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday granted six-week interim bail on medical grounds to RJD chief Lalu Prasad's close aide Amit Katyal in a money laundering case linked to the alleged land-for-jobs scam in the Indian Railways. Katyal, who was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on 11 November, 2023, argued that after undergoing bariatric surgery, he required further treatment and care which was not available in Tihar jail. While allowing his interim bail, a vacation bench of Justice Dharmesh Sharma observed that the dietary requirements of Katyal are such that they cannot be provided in the jail premises, and post bariatric surgery, he needs proper diet in order to attain adequate physical, mental and psychological well-being. *—PTI*

NIA announces ₹10 lakh reward on Goldy Brar

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday declared a cash reward of Rs 10 lakh each for sharing information that can help in arresting Canada-based terrorist Goldy Brar and another accused wanted in an "extortion and firing" case in Chandigarh. The case has been registered under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the Arms Act against accused Satwinder Singh alias Satinderjit Singh alias Goldy Brar, son of Shamsher Singh, a resident of Adesh Nagar, Sri Muktsar Sahib City, Punjab, and accused Gurpreet Singh alias Goldy Dhillon alias Goldy Rajpura, son of Sukhjinder Singh of Baba Deep Singh Colony, Rajpura, Punjab, it said. *—PTI*

Zero FIR, online plaints highlights of new crime laws

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Zero FIR, registration of police complaints online, summons through electronic modes and mandatory videography of crime scenes of all heinous crimes are the key highlights of the three new criminal laws that will come into effect from 1 July.

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023 and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam 2023 mark a significant step towards empowering Indian citizens and aim to create a more accessible, supportive and efficient justice system for everyone, official sources said.

The new laws, enacted late last year, are set to replace the British-era Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act respectively.

Under the new laws, a person can now report incidents by electronic communication, without the need to physically visit a police station. This allows for easier and quicker reporting, facilitating prompt action by the police, the sources said.

With the introduction of zero FIR, a person can file a First Information Report (FIR) at any police station, regardless of jurisdiction. This eliminates delays in initiating legal proceedings and ensures immediate reporting of the offence.

Under the new laws, victims will receive a free copy of the FIR, ensuring their participation in the legal process.

In the event of an arrest, the individual has the right to inform a person of his choice about his or her situation. This will ensure immediate support and assistance to the arrested individual. Besides, arrest details will now be prominently displayed within police stations and district headquarters, allowing families and friends of the arrested person easy access to important information. *—PTI*

PREPARATION FOR NEW LAWS

- 40 lakh grassroots workers trained
- 5.65 lakh police, prison officials trained
- National Crime Records Bureau to provide assistance to States, UTs to adapt laws
- Doordarshan telecastes special programmes

Hope MPs will not be suspended: Oppn to Birla

Oppn asks LS Speaker to be impartial, defend Constitution

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Congratulating Om Birla for being elected Speaker of the Lok Sabha for a second term, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi and other opposition MPs on Wednesday hoped they would be allowed to raise the voice of people in the House and incidents like the suspension of MPs will not be repeated.

While the opposition pushed a contest for the post of Speaker by pitching K Suresh against Birla, who was announced elected by a voice vote, Gandhi went and congratulated Birla on the floor of the House. He also accompanied the new Speaker to the Chair along with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju.

PHOTO: PTI

Gandhi said the opposition wanted the House to function "often and well" and added that it was very important that cooperation happened with trust.

Countering the government's claim that the previous Lok Sabha clocked high productivity, the Congress leader also said running the House by silencing the opposition is an undemocratic idea.

"I'd like to congratulate you for your successful election... I congratulate you on behalf of the entire INDIA alliance.

"This House represents the voice of people of India... Of course, the government has political power, but the opposition also represents the voice of India's people," Gandhi said.

Akhilesh Yadav, the leader of Samajwadi Party (SP), the third largest party in the House, hoped that actions like suspension of MPs would not be taken as they hurt the dignity of the House.

On similar lines, TMC leader Sudip Bandyopadhyay said the suspension of MPs in the 17th Lok Sabha was "not desired".

DMK's TR Baalu also reminded the Speaker that he should treat the opposition and the ruling party in the same manner.

> **I hope no Muslim MP is called terrorist or bills are rushed this time. I would request you that from today you are neither BJP nor Congress or Samajwadi, you have only one party, the Constitution**
>
> -Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi, Srinagar MP

AIMIM MP Asaduddin Owaisi meanwhile said, "The character of the House has changed and BJP won't be able to 'steam roll'... I hope that the government will lessen your burden by electing a Deputy speaker." He may face suspension "hailing Palestine" after taking oath as a Member of Parliament. *—PTI*

Democracy was strangled during Emergency, says PM

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla for his condemnation of the Emergency in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday and said it was a wonderful gesture to stand in silence in honour of all those who suffered during those days.

Birla read out a resolution condemning the Emergency in the Lok Sabha, shortly after he was elected speaker, and flayed the then-government headed by prime minister Indira Gandhi.

A large number of MPs stood in silence for a few moments amid protests by Congress MPs and some other opposition members.

Modi said in a post on X, "I am glad that the Honourable Speaker strongly condemned the Emergency, highlighted the excesses committed during that time and also mentioned the manner in which democracy was strangled."

Emergency was imposed 50 years ago but it is important for today's youth to know about it because it remains a fitting example of what happens when the Constitution is trampled over, public opinion is stifled and institutions are destroyed, he added. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

- Om Birla read out a resolution condemning the Emergency in the Lok Sabha, shortly after he was elected speaker, and flayed the then-government headed by prime minister Indira Gandhi

TN seeks caste census, Assembly passes resolution

CHENNAI, 26 JUNE

Tamil Nadu Assembly on Wednesday passed a unanimous resolution urging the Centre to take up caste-based census soon.

The resolution piloted by Chief Minister MK Stalin said the central government should immediately commence the census work, which is due from 2021, along with caste-based population census this time.

"This House considers that caste-based population census is essential to formulate policies in order to ensure equal rights and equal opportunities in education, economy and employment to every citizen of India," the resolution stated.

The legislators belonging to various political parties including the BJP supported the resolution which was adopted by the House in the absence of the principal Opposition AIADMK members who were suspended from the Assembly for disrupting the proceedings. Speaker M Appavu said the resolution was adopted unanimously.

Earlier, moving the resolution Stalin had said only the union government was empowered to conduct the population census as per section 3 of the Census Act, 1948. Though the Collection of Statistics Act, 2008, facilitated state governments to collect data about the socio-economic status of the people, under part A of Section 3 of the Act, state governments cannot collect data on communities listed under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, the Chief Minister said.

PMK MLA R Arul termed the move as 'unnecessary' as the state government has powers to conduct caste census. *—PTI*

Pitroda back as Head of Indian Overseas Congress

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday reappointed Sam Pitroda as chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress, weeks after he resigned from the post following some controversial remarks in the middle of Lok Sabha elections which the BJP termed as "racist".

Pitroda, who is considered a close aide of Rahul Gandhi, resigned from the post on May 8, and his resignation was accepted by the Congress chief. "Congress president has reappointed Sam Pitroda as chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress with immediate effect," AICC general secretary K C Venugopal said in a statement.

Pitroda had stoked a major controversy with his remarks during a podcast where he cited ethnic and racial identities like Chinese, Africans, Arabs and Whites to describe the physical appearance of Indians from different parts of the country *—PTI*

EXAM ROW

STOP THE NEET AND NET SCAMS!
RESIGN EDUCATION MINISTER NOW!
SCRAP NTA!
END CENTRALIZED EDUCATION!
NO MORE PAPER LEAKS!
KYS
NOT ANOTHER COMMITTEE TO SAVE SCAMSTERS AND COACHING MAFIA. WE DEMAND RE-EXAM!
NET पेपर में हुई गड़बड़ियों का जिम्मेदार कौन? शिक्षा मंत्री जवाब दो!
NTA अधिकारियों को तुरंत बर्खास्त किया जाए, और NTA को भंग किया जाए!!

Krantikari Yuva Sangathan supporters protest against NTA and demand for re-NEET, at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Wednesday. Over a dozen students were detained during a protest organised by JNU students' union. Meanwhile, Kerala Assembly unanimously passed a resolution condemning the irregularities in the entrance exams, demanding Centre to take steps to address grievances of affected candidates PHOTO: ANI

EAM calls Myanmar deputy PM; flags border violence

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

The External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday conveyed to his Myanmarese counterpart U Than Shwe India's "deep concern" over the impact of violence and instability in Myanmar on the Indian border and sought cooperation for early return of Indians trapped in Myawaddy town.

Jaishankar met Shwe, also Myanmar's deputy prime minister, in Delhi, in the first publicly acknowledged engagement in India with a senior leader of the military junta since it seized power in a coup on 1, February, 2021. Shwe was transiting through New Delhi while returning to Myanmar from a foreign trip. Jaishankar told Shwe that India is open to engaging all stakeholders to address the situation.

Several parts of Myanmar have been witnessing intense fighting between the military junta and resistance forces. The resistance forces have already captured several towns. *—PTI*

SAD reposes faith in Badal following leaders' revolt

CHANDIGARH, 26 JUNE

A day after a section of Shiromani Akali Da (SAD)l leaders revolted against its chief Sukhbir Singh Badal, the party on Wednesday said its working committee reposed faith in the leadership of Badal. The committee also asked "detractors" not to play into the hands of enemies of 'panth'.

The SAD had called the rebel leaders "frustrated elements sponsored by the BJP" to weaken it.

PHOTO: PTI

Besides Badal, the meeting of the working committee here was attended by party leaders including Balwinder Singh Bhundar, Daljit Singh Cheema, Mahesh Inder Singh Grewal, Hira Singh Gabria and Paramjit Singh Sarna.

On Tuesday, some senior SAD leaders demanded that Badal should step down as party chief following its rout in the Lok Sabha elections in Punjab and also announced that a 'SAD bachao' movement would be launched in July.

Prominent among those leaders who raised a banner of revolt included former MP Prem Singh Chandumajra, former SGPC chief Bibi Jagir Kaur, ex-MLA Gurpartap Singh Wadala, former ministers Sikandar Singh Maluka, Parminder Singh Dhindsa, Sarwan Singh Phillaur, and Surjit Singh Rakhra, and party leader Sucha Singh Chhotepur.

Meanwhile, SAD Delhi unit president Paramjit Singh Sarna on Wednesday took a dig at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), claiming that the BJP wanted to weaken regional parties through operation Lotus. *—PTI/ANI*

NAGALAND CIVIC BODY POLLS TAKE PLACE AFTER 20 YEARS, VOTER TURNOUT 80%

KOHIMA, 26 JUNE

Around 80 per cent of the over 2.23 lakh electorate on Wednesday exercised their franchise in the Nagaland civic polls, held after a gap of 20 years, a senior official said.

Voting for 25 urban local bodies (ULBs) in 10 districts began at 7.30 am amid tight security and continued till 4 pm, he said.

The turnout figure is likely to increase as voters were still in queue at many polling stations, the official said.

This is a historic election for the northeastern state, as the polling to three municipalities and 36 town councils were conducted after a gap of 20 years.

The urban local body polls were also held for the first time with 33 per cent women reservation, the official said.

The votes will be counted on 29 June. *—PTI*

ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

Video claims 'Made in India' missile found at Gaza camp

Continued from Page 1

On 6 June, in the aftermath of Israel's bombing of a United Nations shelter at Nuseirat refugee camp in Gaza, the Quds News Network released a video of the remains of a missile dropped by Israeli warplanes. Amid the tangled parts, a label clearly read: "Made in India."

Zain Hussain, a researcher at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), a think tank, said the video required further investigation but observed that a large share of the collaboration between India and Israel is known to revolve around missile production, in particular the Barak surface-to-air missile.

According to SIPRI, the Indian company Premier Explosives Limited makes solid propellants – a significant part of the rocket motors, but not the whole motor – for MRSAM and LRSAM missiles. These are the Indian designations for Barak medium and long-range surface-to-air missiles of Israeli design.

The company's executive director, T Chowdary, admitted to exporting to Israel amid the current war in Gaza, during a conference call on 31 March. "We have received the pending revenue from the Israel export order, and this has shown an exponential jump in the revenue of the quarter," he told investors, according to the minutes of the meeting. "We are happy to announce that we have highest ever quarterly revenue."

- According to SIPRI the Indian company Premier Explosives Limited makes solid propellants – a significant part of the rocket motors

Chowdary presented Premier Explosives Ltd as "the only Indian company which specialises in the export of fully assembled rocket motor". He added the company had begun manufacturing mines and ammunitions and started exporting RDX and HMX explosives. In its January 2024 overview, the company listed exports to Israel in the "defence & space" sector, which SIPRI deemed likely to include propellants for Barak missiles. Premier Explosives did not respond to Al Jazeera's requests for comment.

Indian made UAVs

Yet, India's collaboration with Israel goes far beyond rocket propellers.

In December 2018, Adani Defence & Aerospace and Israel's Elbit Systems inaugurated Adani Elbit Unmanned Aerial Vehicles Complex (UAV) in Hyderabad. They made Hermes 900 Medium Altitude Long Endurance UAV, which can fly for up to 36 hours at 30,000 feet. This year, India announced its first indigenous medium-altitude long-endurance drone, the Drishti 10 Starliner, built on the Hermes model. Israel is known to be systematically using drones as it wages its war on Gaza, which has killed more than 37,000 people, most of them women and children. The use of Hermes drones has been documented in Gaza.

India's balancing act

India has been pursuing a longstanding balancing act in its relationship with Israel. New Delhi has called for peace in Gaza and supported calls for a ceasefire. "But reports that it is supplying Israel with weapons could disrupt that narrative," Nicolas Blarel, the author of The Evolution of India's Israel Policy, told Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera sought comments from India's Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Defence on 17 June and then again on 21 June, but has not received a response.

—Courtesy, Al Jazeera.

PHOTO: PTI

Death toll hits 61 in Tamil Nadu hooch tragedy

KALLAKURICHI 26 JUNE

The death toll in Kallakurichi hooch tragedy increased to 61, as per the Kallakurichi District Collectorate Currently, 91 people are undergoing treatment at the Government Kallakurichi Medical College and 20 people have been discharged from the Government Kallakurichi Medical College, as per the hospital authorities. The total count of people affected due to consumption of illicit liquor has now increased to 225. Earlier on Wednesday, the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) Chairman Kishor Makwana along with others met the family members of the people who died due to the consumption of illicit liquor in Karunapuram area of the Kallakurichi district. *—ANI*

2 cops suspended in Burger King shooting case

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Delhi Police has suspended a sub-inspector and a head constable in connection with the leak of the CCTV footage of the shooting of a man inside a food outlet here last week, officials said on Wednesday. The two officers were posted at the Subhash Nagar Police Post under the jurisdiction of which the outlet is located, they said. Aman Joon, 26, was shot dead by two gangsters while he was sitting with a woman inside a Burger King outlet in the west Delhi locality on June 18. Police said Joon suffered 38 gunshot wounds. A 14-second CCTV footage of the shooting surfaced on social media on June 20, showing the men attacking Joon in a full public view. Two officers had shared the footage with their counterparts in other units for further investigation. *—PTI*

Punjab on high alert after 2 armed men spotted

CHANDIGARH, 26 JUNE

Security forces were put on high alert after a villager claimed to have spotted two suspicious armed men in Punjab's Pathankot, officials said on Wednesday. Punjab Police, along with the Army and the Border Security Force (BSF), launched a massive search operation in Pathankot, a senior Punjab Police officer said. The search operation was being carried out in the Bamial area, the officer said. "We are on alert," Deputy Inspector General (Border Range, Amritsar), Rakesh Kaushal, told PTI. According to sources, a villager in informed the police about seeing two armed suspects. Checks are also being conducted at bus stands and railway stations. *—PTI*

Making films that question govt a risk: Kamal Hassan

MUMBAI, 26 JUNE

Artistes are citizens of the country who have every right to hold the authorities to account, said veteran star Kamal Haasan, admitting there is a "risk" in making films that question the government. "People were making films even then. We will continue to make those kinds of films, it doesn't matter who is at the top of the establishment. That's not just the filmmaker, that's the citizen's right to ask those questions. The 69-year-old said not only politicians, but citizens are also to be blamed for the corruption plaguing the country. " Nothing has changed thanks to corruption. Everything will change thanks to the collective conscience," he added. The actor-filmmaker said while he is a fan of Mahatma Gandhi, he doesn't subscribe to the ideology of tolerance. *—PTI*

HC UPHOLDS MUMBAI COLLEGE'S BAN ON HIJAB

College claims the decision was merely a disciplinary action

MUMBAI, 26 JUNE

Bombay High Court on Wednesday refused to interfere in a decision taken by a city-based college to impose a ban on hijab, burka and naqab in its premises.

A division bench of Justices AS Chandurkar and Rajesh Patil said it was not inclined to interfere in the decision taken by the college and dismissed a petition filed against it by nine girl students, who are in the second and third year of a science degree course.

The students moved the HC earlier this month, challenging a directive issued by the Chembur Trombay Education Society's NG Acharya and DK Marathe College imposing a dress code under which students cannot wear a hijab, naqab, burka, stoles, caps and badges inside the premises.

Students had initially sought redress from college, but since there was no response, they filed a petition in High Court PHOTO: PTI

The petitioners claimed such a directive was against their fundamental rights to practice their religion, right to privacy and right to choice.

The plea termed the college action as "arbitrary, unreasonable, bad-in-law and perverse".

The petitioner's advocate, Altaf Khan, last week submitted before the HC certain verses from the Quran to support their claim that wearing hijab was an essential part of Islam.

The college had claimed the decision to ban hijab, naqab and burka in its premises was merely a disciplinary action for uniform dress code and was not against the Muslim community.

The girls, however, claimed in their plea that such a directive was "nothing but colourable exercise of power".

The girls also raised their grievance against the notice with the chancellor, vice chancellor of the Mumbai University and the University Grants Commission, requesting their intervention "to upkeep the spirit of imparting education to all citizens without discrimination".

However, when the students did not get any response, they filed a petition in the HC. *—PTI*

PHOTO:X/@AMBEDKARITEIND

Telangana Dalit boy tied up, beaten for plucking pomegranate

HYDERABAD, 26 JUNE

A 14-year-old Dalit boy was allegedly tied up and beaten by a man on the city outskirts for plucking a pomegranate from his house, police said on Wednesday. The incident took place on 22 June at Kesaram village of Shabad mandal. The victim belonging to the SC community, scaled the compound wall of a house to pluck pomegranate from a tree, they said. The house owner, a retired government school headmaster, caught the boy and tied his hands and legs with a rope and allegedly beat him up, they added. A picture purportedly showing the boy lying on the ground has gone viral. When the complainant went to the spot, the man and his son allegedly abused her, it added. *—PTI*

RESIDENTS FLEA

Homes develop cracks due to land subsidence in Srinagar

SRINAGAR, 26 JUNE

At least six residential buildings in the city's Rainawari locality have developed cracks and suffered damage due to suspected land subsidence, prompting the administration to vacate the homes and form an expert committee to ascertain the details and suggest remedial measures, officials said on Wednesday.

Some homes in the Khwajapora Surteng area of Rainawari started to develop cracks on 17 June, that became wider over the next few days, the officials said.

The locals believe the homes began to develop cracks after some portions of the land began to sink.

"The cracks widened with each passing day. We approached the administration, which asked us to vacate the houses," local resident Manzoor Ahmed said.

The situation has sparked panic among the locals.

The area was hit by land subsidence in 1999-2000, after which a case study was done by a team of experts led by Bikram Singh Bali from the Department of Earth Sciences at the University of Kashmir.

Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed land subsidence incidents in the recent past as well. In April, 74 families were forced to leave their homes in Pernote village of Ramban district due to land sinking.

Two months before that, more than a dozen residential buildings and a mosque in the Garsu village of Doda district developed cracks.

In July 2023, cracks were seen on the riverside road in Batengo of Anantnag district.

The cause of the land subsidence could be natural factors such as groundwater dissolution and earthquakes, as well as human activities such as groundwater extraction, mining and urban development, which lead to compaction and subsidence of the ground, experts say. *—PTI*

A man shows cracks that have appeared in his house in the land subsidence affected area of Rainawari, in Srinagar, Wednesday PHOTO: PTI

- The cause of the land subsidence could be natural factors such as groundwater dissolution and earthquakes, as well as human activities extraction, mining

Doctor, daughter test positive for Zika virus in Pune

PUNE, 26 JUNE

A 46-year-old doctor and his teenage daughter have tested positive for Zika virus infection in Pune city of Maharashtra, but their health condition is stable, an official said on Wednesday.

The man recently developed symptoms like fever and rashes, following which he was admitted to a private hospital. The medical facility sent his blood samples to the city-based National Institute of Virology (NIV) for analysis. On 21 June, his reports confirmed that he tested positive for Zika virus infection, a health official of the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) said.

The doctor is a resident of Erandwane area of the city, he said. The Zika virus disease is transmitted through the bite of an infected Aedes mosquito, which is also known to transmit infections like dengue and chikungunya. The virus was first identified in Uganda in 1947. After these two cases were reported in the city, the PMC's health department has started conducting surveillance, the official said.

Although no other suspected cases have been found in the area, the authorities have started taking precautionary steps to curb the breeding of mosquitoes, he said. *—PTI*

Rain damages Kerala homes, Assam reels under flood

T'PURAM, 26 JUNE

Houses were damaged, trees uprooted, and water levels rose steadily in rivers and dams across Kerala after heavy rains accompanied by strong winds continued to lash several parts of the state on Wednesday.

High tides and sea incursions were reported in districts like Thrissur and Ernakulam, and landslides wreaked havoc in the high ranges of Kozhikode.

Several houses have were damaged in Alappuzha, Kannur and Idukki districts following heavy downpour and winds since on Tuesday night, authorities said. A portion of the "annadana mandapam" (dining hall) at the famed Ochira Parabrahma Temple in Kollam district collapsed in incessant rains.

District Administration of Ernakulam urged people living on the banks of the Muvattupuzha and Thodupuzha rivers to maintain extra vigil as three shutters of Malankara Dam were raised.

Moderate to intense rainfall with winds gusting up to 40 kmph is expected in Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Kottayam, Idukki, Ernakulam, and Thrissur districts in the coming hours.

Heavy rain forecast in Andhra from 26 to 28 June

India Meteorological Department on Wednesday predicted heavy rains accompanied by lightning in parts of Andhra Pradesh for three days from 26 to 28 June.

Heavy downpour is likely in parts of North Coastal Andhra Pradesh (NCAP), Yanam and South Coastal Andhra Pradesh (SCAP).

Gusty winds reaching up to 50 km per hour (kmph) are likely in these places.

Flood situation in Assam improves

Assam's flood situation improved on Wednesday with the water level of major rivers and their tributaries receding even as nearly 1.50 lakh people in were reeling under the deluge in Barpeta, Cachar, Darrang, Dhemaji, Goalpara, Kamrup and Karimganj districts, a bulletin said.

The toll in this year's flood, landslide and storm has risen to 41 with one death due to drowning reported from Cachar district on Tuesday, the bulletin said. *—PTI*

HOSTEL HORROR

15 students beaten up by seniors in Arunchal

ITANAGAR, 26 JUNE

Altogether 15 students of class 8 in a government-run school were assaulted allegedly by their seniors in a hostel in Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh, a police officer said on Wednesday.

The school authorities suspended five senior students allegedly involved in the incident that took place on Tuesday, Principal Rajeev Ranjan said.

A police complaint has also been lodged in connection with the incident.

The junior boys of the Jawahar Navodya Vidyalaya at Bordumsa were beaten up with sticks allegedly by several class 11 students in the hostel. The injured students were taken to a hospital which discharged them after administering first aid.

Principal Rajeev Ranjan convened a disciplinary action committee meeting.

In the meeting, the members of the committee found five senior students of being guilty of inflicting physical harm and psychological trauma on class 8 students.

The principal said strict action will be taken in this case and disciplinary measures will be implemented to ensure that such incidents do not recur.

The school has classes from 6 to 12 and has 530 student boarders including girls. *—PTI*

Part of Pune pub linked to drug use demolished

PUNE, 26 JUNE

The Pune civic body on Tuesday demolished an "unauthorised" structure inside a bar linked to alleged drug use, while police filed a case against its owners, a day after the Maharashtra government ordered a crackdown on buildings flouting rules in the city.

According to a Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) release, a 125 square meter unauthorised structure inside Liquid Leisure Lounge (L3) bar on Fergusson College Road was razed as part of a drive launched against more than 20 establishments, including pubs, restaurants and eateries, in the city for violating norms.

The action was undertaken after it came to light that some internal changes were made inside L3 in violation of norms, said the release.

Pune civic body's building department took action against more than 20 establishments, including pubs and restaurants, and demolished unauthorised structures measuring 36,845 square meter, said the release. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

M'rashtra minister suggests 7 'dry' days in Pune to establish bar rules

PUNE, 26 JUNE

Maharashtra cabinet minister Chandrakant Patil on Wednesday suggested closure of pubs and bars in the city for about a week and said citizens should come on one platform during this period to chalk out rules for these establishments. "All Punekars should think of keeping the pubs and bars (in the city) closed for at least three days or seven days and everybody should come together on one platform and chalk out rules for the timings of these establishments," Patil suggested. He said "clear dry days" for seven days should be observed and a rule book should be made besides putting in efforts towards its effective implementation. *—PTI*

MBBS student faces dialysis 4 times after ragging in R'than

JAIPUR, 26 JUNE

A first-year MBBS student of Dungarpur medical college had to undergo dialysis four times after allegedly being ragged by some senior students last month, which caused an infection in his kidney, police said.

According to the SHO of Dungarpur Sadar police station, Girdhari Singh, seven second-year students made the victim do more than 300 sit-ups at a place near the college on 15 May. This exerted severe pressure on his kidney, leading to a malfunction and an infection, he said.

The victim was hospitalised in Ahmedabad for a week during which dialysis was done four times.

- Seven second-year students made the victim do more than 300 sit-ups at a place near the college on 15 May

The college principal lodged an FIR against seven accused students on Tuesday after they were found guilty in an inquiry by the anti-ragging committee of the institute, the SHO said.

"He had faced ragging earlier too but did not complain. The latest incident came to light after the college authority received a complaint through the online portal on 20 June following which an inquiry was conducted. *—PTI*

60% BY 2030

50% adults physically inactive in 2022: Lancet

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Almost 50 per cent of adults in India engaged in insufficient levels of physical activity in 2022, according to a study published in The Lancet Global Health journal.

Far more women in India (57 per cent) were found to be insufficiently physically active, compared to men (42 per cent), in line with trends across the South Asian region, the study found.

The insufficient levels of physical activity in women in the region were, on average, 14 per cent higher than those in men, it said.

The South Asian region also ranked the second highest in terms of adults being insufficiently physically active after high-income Asia Pacific region, an international team of researchers, including those from the World Health Organization (WHO), said.

This was up by five per cent from 26.4 per cent of the adults worldwide insufficiently engaging in physical activity in 2010, they found, and if the 2010-2022 trends continued, the authors said that the global target of improving physical activity engagement by 15 per cent would not be met.

In India, a little over 22 per cent of the adults engaged in insufficient physical activity in the year 2000, while in 2010, close to 34 per cent of the adults were insufficiently physically active, the researchers found.

They projected that in 2030, 60 per cent of the adults could be insufficiently engaging in physical activity, should current trends continue.

For the study, the researchers analysed data of physical activity reported by adults (aged at least 18 years) in population-based surveys to estimate the number of adults performing insufficient physical activity for 197 countries and territories from 2000 to 2022.

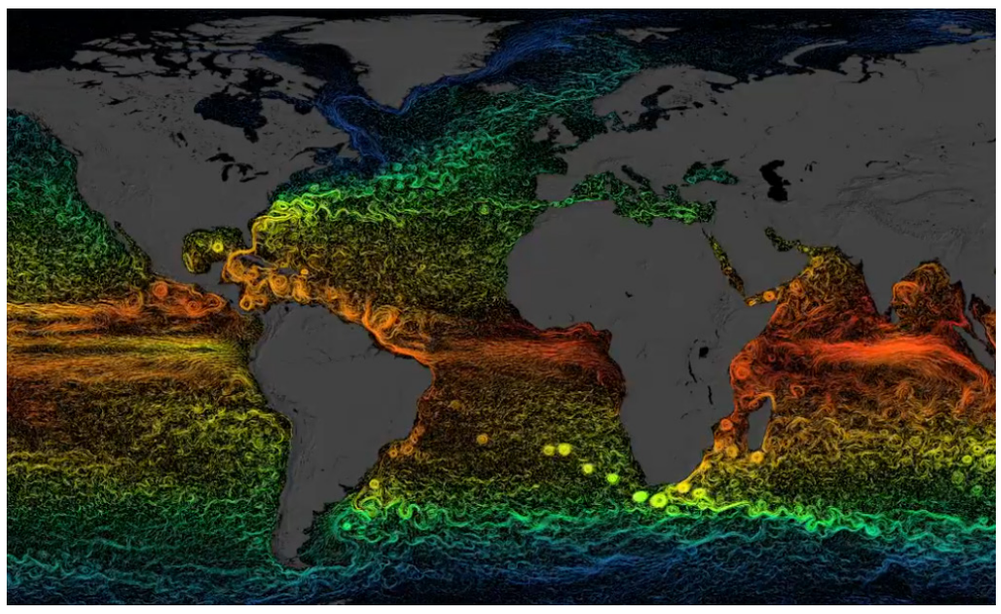
Further, 254 million were estimated to have obesity and 185 million estimated to have high levels of LDL or 'bad' cholesterol, according to the study. *—PTI*

Women were found to be more physically inactive PHOTO: FREEPIK

EARTH SPEAKS, WE IGNORE

NASA released a scary visualisation of the ocean waters being affected by increase in greenhouse gases from human activities. NASA released the picture on X with the post "Our Ocean is changing." Warmer hues such as red, orange and yellow indicate higher temperatures, while cooler shades like green and blue signify lower temperatures

PHOTO: NASA



Journalism has become a hub of vocation crisis

This year has been a grim one for journalism, with layoffs at the Los Angeles Times, Time magazine, NBC News, Forbes, National Geographic, Business Insider and Sports Illustrated.

Further cuts loom in newsrooms across the US.

Growing numbers of reporters and editors, tired of waiting for the other shoe to drop, are exiting the profession, citing burnout as the reason for their departure.

When scholars of journalism study the effects of the shrinking press corps, they usually focus on how it hurts civil society.

Vast swaths of the country are at risk of becoming "news deserts," with limited access to reliable local journalism. This state of affairs makes it harder for people to make educated decisions and is linked to reduced political engagement, research shows. What's more, fewer reporters means less oversight of those wielding political and economic power.

This reflects a broader problem – namely, the ways that relentless economic pressures are pushing people away from socially important careers.

Even though teaching hasn't traditionally paid well, there was a time when the profession accorded more respect and fewer financial burdens

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Meaning over money

As an occupation, journalism is attractive to many people because they can be paid to do work that's interesting and socially beneficial.

In this regard, it is similar to otherwise very different jobs like nursing, teaching, social work and caregiving.

These are "vocations," in the sense that sociologist Max Weber described them more than a century ago.

Based on strong personal commitments, vocations promise recognition and a sense of self-worth for doing work that's connected to broader values: healing people, fighting injustice, imparting knowledge, serving the cause of democracy.

While these jobs have never paid especially well, people could get by and raise a family on them. That's becoming less and less the case.

Dreams clash with reality

Journalism, in many ways, represents ground zero for the crisis that confronts contemporary vocations.

For one, pay in the industry is stagnant.

With a median wage in 2023 of USD 57,500, journalists' salaries have not kept pace with inflation or jobs in public relations and corporate communication.

Job security, as ongoing layoffs suggest, is nearly nonexistent.

Recent drives to unionise newsrooms have done little to stem losses, and they do nothing at all for the freelancers that constitute a growing share of all journalists – and, for the most part, belong to no union at all.

Inside or outside newsrooms, work typically involves longer hours and more demands.

And to what end? In many cases, it's to perform tasks that aren't that interesting or socially valuable.

The journalists we spoke to bemoaned the relentless demands to churn out new content for websites and social media feeds.

They talked about using multimedia to report on topics that were assigned primarily for their potential to amuse and entertain, rather than to inform or provoke thought.

They griped about spending more time sitting at their desks sifting through press releases instead of gathering original reports from the field. And they described fewer and fewer opportunities to pursue stories that are personally interesting and socially valuable.

In this context, it is hardly surprising that many people decide to leave journalism, or avoid a career in it entirely. Jobs in public relations pay substantially more, with a USD 66,750 median annual wage, and involve fixed hours and more stability.

This appeal is not naively held. Surveys regularly show that aspiring journalists are well aware of the troubles confronting the industry. They're nonetheless still willing to sacrifice better pay and job security for work that allows for self-expression and connects to broader values.

Their persistence, in spite of these conditions, highlights something important about journalism and vocations more broadly: These are careers that provide rewards that cannot be reduced to money.

Creeping disillusionment

The enduring attraction of contemporary vocations clarifies the nature of the crisis. In contrast to older vocations, such as the priesthood, many people still dream of being journalists, nurses and teachers.

But people who seek out these vocations today routinely find themselves exhausted and demoralised.

Nurses and caretakers are encouraged to eliminate "inefficiencies" so that the provision of care does not impede their employers' ability to make money. Teachers are tasked with imparting practical skills to students while becoming more "entrepreneurial" themselves as budgets get slashed. Journalists are asked to produce news that conforms to, rather than challenges, audience expectations.

Add in the low pay, and these conditions threaten to reduce the belief that such jobs are worthwhile.

Many of the journalists we spoke to while researching our book find ways to manage the disappointments that come from doing work that stands in tension with what initially drew them. Or they reorient their work to better adapt to the profession's commercial needs.

At some point, the grip of market forces could erode interest in vocations to such an extent that they disappear altogether. In fact, some vocations today are probably sustained more by their idealised reputations on the silver screen – in films like "Spotlight" and "Dead Poets Society" – than they are by the experiences of actual reporters and teachers in 2024.

For the moment – and for the foreseeable future – the more likely development is not disinterest, but a struggle to have a career in these fields. That's not just a failure of a profession overtaken by commercial considerations. It's a reflection of a society unable to satisfy its citizens' basic desires for finding meaning through the work they do

—PTI

SALAR ساڵار

RaGa to face bigger test as an Opposition leader

Rahul Gandhi of Congress has been appointed leader of the Opposition in parliament, filling a post that had been empty for a decade.

It's the first time Prime Minister Narendra Modi's main rival has held a constitutional role since he joined politics in 2004.

Gandhi will now sit on committees that make key appointments and act as a counterbalance to the Prime Minister.

Since 2014, no Opposition party had won 10 per cent or 55 of the 543 seats required to claim the post, but Congress took 99 seats in the recent general election.

Modi remains in power with help from allies, but his party fell short of a majority after two consecutive landslides.

Congress said Gandhi would ensure the government was held to account at all times.

Some observers say his appointment heralds a positive change for democracy - the Opposition has repeatedly accused the governing BJP of authoritarianism, a charge it denies.

"This is going to be a turbulent parliament and the Opposition is going to take the government to task," political commentator Neerja Chowdhury told BBC.

Chowdhury said the role would also test Gandhi's mettle as a leader.

Although he has been in politics for more than 25 years, and an MP for five terms - he has never been a minister or won a general election for his party.

"He'll have to lead from the front and make sure there are no ruffled feathers, within his party or the Opposition bloc," Chowdhury said. "He will be accountable for what goes wrong and what goes right."

Congress appointed Gandhi as the leader of the Opposition (LoP) on Tuesday, after a meeting with its alliance partners, who make up the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) Opposition bloc.

The coalition performed far better than expected in the general election, securing 232 seats.

That wasn't enough to stop Modi from forming a government but it ensured BJP alone couldn't get to the 272 mark and it had to rely on allies.

On Wednesday, Gandhi made his first appearance in parliament in his new role.

He congratulated BJP's Om Birla, who has been appointed Speaker of the House and assured him of the opposition's support but also pushed for the side's opinions to be heard.

"It is very important that co-operation happens on the basis of trust. It is very important that the voice of the opposition is allowed to be represented in this House," he said.

As LoP, Gandhi will be part of high-profile committees headed by Modi. These committees are responsible for appointing key posts such as the director of India's top crime investigation agency and members of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

Chowdhury says that a stronger Opposition would provide greater room for debate, making it difficult for the government to pass bills without discussions.

"It's also going to be a lot more difficult for the ruling majority to suspend and disqualify MPs, as we've seen happen in the recent past," she adds.

Last year, some key bills - including ones meant to replace India's existing criminal laws - were passed in parliament with almost no debate after 143 Opposition leaders were suspended after protesting against a security breach in parliament.

Sugata Srinivasaraju, a political journalist who has written a book on Gandhi, says his new role would also help Congress leader revive his image as a leader.

"This new job not just brings immense responsibility but will also expect Gandhi to be more methodical, diligent and patient in parliament, which he has not exactly been in the last 20 years," he told BBC.

Gandhi became the President of Congress in 2017, but stepped down following the party's disastrous performance in the 2019 election.

He has often been mocked by Modi and BJP as a non-serious politician. But analysts say that two long marches he undertook across the country in the past couple of years helped him undo that image.

—BBC News

Rahul Gandhi will now sit on committees that make key appointments and act as a counterbalance to Prime Minister Narendra Modi

PHOTO: PTI

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Singer Kumar Sanu, 2 other music labels to sue over AI copyright

Supporters have compared machine learning by AI tools to the way humans learn by reading, hearing and seeing previous works

PHOTO: FREEPIK

- Lawsuits come just months after roughly 200 artists including Billie Eilish and Nicki Minaj signed a letter calling for the "predatory" use of AI to be stopped in the music industry

Kumar Sanu, playback singer is reportedly the first singer from India to legally safeguard his personality rights

This decision comes amid the rapid progression of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology, which is increasingly being used to replicate the voices of well-known celebrities.

After Amitabh Bachchan, Anil Kapoor, and Jackie Shroff, Sanu said that that he will be taking the legal route to protect his voice. He mentioned that he does not want his voice to be used by AI tools for any reason without his consent "One has to protect themselves by way of such methods. AI is dangerous," he added.

Meanwhile, the world's biggest record labels are suing two artificial intelligence (AI) start-ups over alleged copyright violation in a potentially landmark case.

Firms including Sony Music, Universal Music Group and Warner Records say Suno and Udio have committed copyright infringement on an "almost unimaginable scale".

They claim the pair's software steals music to "spit out" similar work and ask for compensation of $150,000 (£118,200) per work.

Suno did not respond to a request for comment. Udio said in a blog post on Tuesday it was "completely uninterested in reproducing content".

The lawsuits, announced on Monday by the Recording Industry Association of America, are part of a wave of lawsuits from authors, news organisations and other groups that are challenging the rights of AI firms to use their work.

Suno, which is based in Massachusetts, released its first product last year and claims more than 10 million people have used its tool to make music.

The company, which has a partnership with Microsoft, charges a monthly fee for its service and recently announced it had raised $125m from investors.

New York-based Udio, known as Uncharted Labs, is backed by high-profile venture capital investors such as Andreessen Horowitz.

It released its app to the public in April, achieving near-instant fame for being the tool used to create "BBL Drizzy" - a parody track related to the feud between the artists Kendrick Lamar and Drake.

In the past, AI firms have argued that their use of the material is legitimate under the fair use doctrine, which allows copyrighted works to be used without a licence under certain conditions, such as for satire and news.

Supporters have compared machine learning by AI tools to the way humans learn by reading, hearing and seeing previous works.

Udio said its system was "explicitly designed to create music reflecting new musical ideas".

It added that it had "implemented and continue to refine state-of-the-art filters to ensure our model does not reproduce copyrighted works or artists' voices".

"We stand behind our technology and believe that generative AI will become a mainstay of modern society," the company said.

But in the complaints, which were filed in federal court in Massachusetts and New York, the record labels say the AI firms are simply making money from having copied the songs.

"The use here is far from transformative, as there is no functional purpose for... [the] AI model to ingest the Copyrighted Recordings other than to spit out new, competing music files," according to the complaints.

The complaints say Suno and Udio produce works like Prancing Queen that even devoted ABBA fans would struggle to distinguish from an authentic recording from the band.

Songs cited in the Udio lawsuit include Mariah Carey's All I Want for Christmas is You and My Girl by The Temptations.

"[The] motive is brazenly commercial and threatens to displace the genuine human artistry that is at the heart of copyright protection," the record labels said in the lawsuits. They said there was nothing about AI that excused the firms from "playing by the rules" and warned that the "wholesale theft" of the recordings threatened "the entire music ecosystem".

The lawsuits come just months after roughly 200 artists including Billie Eilish and Nicki Minaj signed a letter calling for the "predatory" use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the music industry to be stopped.*—BBC News & agen-*

PHOTO: X/ @JOEBIDEN

Biden pardons veterans convicted under gay sex ban

WASHINGTON, 26 JUNE

President Joe Biden pardoned potentially thousands of former US service members convicted of violating a now-repealed military ban on consensual gay sex, saying Wednesday that he is "righting an historic wrong" to clear the way for them to regain lost benefits. Biden's action grants a pardon to service members who were convicted under the Uniform Code of Military Justice's former Article 125, which criminalised sodomy. The law, which has been on the books since 1951, was rewritten in 2013 to prohibit only forcible acts. Those covered by the pardon will be able to apply to receive proof that their conviction has been erased, petition to have their discharges from the military upgraded and move to recover lost pay and benefits. *—AP*

Sunita stranded in space onboard Starliner capsule

WASHINGTON, DC, 26 JUNE

US astronauts Sunita Williams and Barry "Butch" Wilmore have now spent the better part of a month on their space capsule attached to the International Space Station as engineers work out the problems with Starliner. It is when exactly the astronauts will be able to make their return to Earth. A Boeing spokesperson told the Guardian they have "adjusted the return of Starliner Crew Flight Test until after two planned spacewalks on 24 June and 2 July" and that they "currently do not have a date for the return, and will evaluate opportunities after the spacewalks". Starliner blasted on 5 June from Florida's Cape Canaveral Space Force Station after two previously unsuccessful launches on 6 May and 1 June respectively. ***—Courtesy, The Guradian***

Taiwan monitors 4 Chinese vessels in restricted waters

TAIPEI, 26 JUNE

Taiwan's Coast Guard (CGA) on Tuesday monitored four China Coast Guard (CCG) vessels in restricted waters off the Taiwan-controlled Kinmen Islands, Central News Agency (CNA) reported. The intrusion was reported to the CGA's Kinmen-Matsu-Penghu Branch sometime after 5 am. CGA's Kinmen-Matsu-Penghu Branch said that they dispatched three patrol boats to keep a watch on the Chinese vessels and collect evidence until they left the area at 8 am (local time). Taiwan's CGA stressed that the actions of the Chinese Coast Guard do not maintain the ties between Kinmen and Xiamen, nor do they advance regional stability. ***—ANI***

US scribe goes on trial in Russia on espionage charges

YEKATERINBURG, 26 JUNE

Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich went on trial behind closed doors in Yekaterinburg on Wednesday, 15 months after his arrest in the Russian city on espionage charges that he, his employer and the US government vehemently deny. The 32-year-old journalist appeared in the court in a glass defendants' cage, his head shaved and wearing a black-and-blue plaid shirt. A yellow padlock was attached to the cage. Journalists were allowed into the courtroom for a few minutes before the proceedings were closed. Also briefly permitted in court were two consular officers from the US Embassy in Moscow, according to the embassy. Jay Conti, Executive Vice President and general counsel for Dow Jones, publisher of the Journal, described the trial as a sham. ***—AP***

Assange returns home to Australia as a free man

He pleads guilty to obtaining, publishing US military secrets

CANBERRA, 26 JUNE

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange returned to his homeland Australia aboard a charter jet on Wednesday, hours after pleading guilty to obtaining and publishing US military secrets in a deal with Justice Department prosecutors that concludes a drawn-out legal saga.

The criminal case of international intrigue, which had played out for years, came to a surprise end in a most unusual setting with Assange, 52, entering his plea in a US district court in Saipan, the capital of the Northern Mariana Islands. The American commonwealth in the Pacific is relatively close to Assange's native Australia and accommodated his desire to avoid entering the continental United States.

Assange had flown from a London prison to Saipan in a charter jet and flew in the same aircraft to the Australian capital Canberra on the same day.

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange gestures after landing at RAAF air base Fairbairn in Canberra, Australia, on Wednesday ***PHOTO: PTI***

He was accompanied on the flights by Australian Ambassador to the United States Kevin Rudd and High Commissioner to the United Kingdom Stephen Smith, both of whom played key roles in negotiating his freedom with London and Washington.

The flights were paid for by the "Assange team," Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles said, adding his government played a role in facilitating the transport.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese told Parliament that Assange's freedom, after he spent five years in a British prison fighting extradition to the US, was the result of his government's "careful, patient and determined work."

Another of Julian Assange's lawyers, Barry Pollack, expected his client would continue vocal campaigning.

"WikiLeaks's work will continue and Assange, I have no doubt, will be a continuing force for freedom of speech and transparency in government," Pollack told reporters outside the Saipan court.

The plea deal required Assange to admit guilt to a single felony count but also permitted him to return to Australia without any time in an American prison. The judge sentenced him to the five years he'd already spent behind bars in the UK fighting extradition to the US on an Espionage Act indictment that could have carried a lengthy prison sentence in the event of a conviction. He was holed up for seven years before that in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London. *—AP*

BACK BREAKING US HEAT

A wax statue of the US's 16th president Abraham Lincoln in Washington DC melted over the weekend due to heat ***PHOTO:*** X/***@VOLCAHOLIC1***

Heatwave kills at least 450 in Karachi: NGO

KARACHI, 26 JUNE

A searing heatwave that has hit Pakistan's biggest city has led to the death of at least 450 people over the last four days, a leading NGO Edhi Foundation claimed on Wednesday.

The NGO said it received at least 427 bodies in the last four days excluding Wednesday while the Sindh government had on Tuesday released 23 bodies in three government hospitals.

Karachi, Pakistan's port city, has been hit by extreme hot weather since Saturday with soaring mercury crossing 40 degrees Celsius for the third consecutive day on Wednesday, temperatures that are too high for a coastal areas.

"We have four mortuaries operating in Karachi and we have reached a stage where there is no more space to keep more bodies in our mortuaries," Faisal Edhi, who heads the Foundation, said.

"The sad fact is that many of these bodies have come from areas where a lot of load shedding is going on even in this harshest weather," he said.

Edhi said most of the bodies belonged to homeless people and drug addicts on the streets. "The extreme heat wave got to them as these people spend their entire day out in the open searching for fixes," he said only to add: "But only the government hospitals or where they were initially taken to can tell you the real cause of death."

He said on Tuesday itself they had received 135 bodies at their morgues and 128 on Monday.

Karachites also have to brave long hours of load shedding in many areas with the electricity supplier, Karachi Electric, now claiming it has to resort to power cuts because the Sindh government still has to clear dues of Rs 10 billion. *—PTI*

The crowd broke through police lines to storm parliament in Nairobi before setting parts of it ablaze ***PHOTO: PTI***

23 killed, Parl ablaze in Kenya protests

NAIROBI, 26 JUNE

At least 23 protesters were killed during protests in Kenya and a section of parliament went up in flames as demonstrations against new tax proposals escalated on Tuesday. An angry crowd broke through police lines to storm parliament in the capital Nairobi before setting parts of it ablaze.

In an address on Tuesday evening, President William Ruto said all means would be deployed to "thwart any attempts by dangerous criminals to undermine the security and stability of our country". He has deployed the military to quell the protests.

Protesters broke into parliament, vandalising the interior and setting parts of the complex on fire. The ceremonial mace, symbolising the authority of the legislature, was stolen. Police then opened fire with live ammunition, according to the Kenya Medical Association. The protests have largely been organised by young people through social media.

What are Kenya's controversial tax proposals?

Kenya's president faces tough choices after deadly protests. President Ruto pledged a tough response to what he called the "violence and anarchy".

"It is not in order or even conceivable that criminals pretending to be peaceful protesters can reign terror against the people, their elected representatives and the institutions established under our constitution and expect to go scot-free," Ruto added.

On Wednesday morning Speaker of Parliament Moses Wetangula praised young people for leading the discourse on the finance bill and the state of the economy.

He however said that "violence, disrespect and wanton destruction of property and blatant attack on public institutions shall not be condoned".

The killing of protesters has also been widely condemned including by human rights defenders, lawyers and the church. *—BBC News*

Israel to roll out plan to replace Hamas govt

TEL AVIV, 26 JUNE

Jerusalem will "soon" roll out a plan to replace Hamas governance in northern Gaza, Israeli National Security Advisor Tzachi Hanegbi said.

Speaking at Reichman University's annual Herzliya Conference, Hanegbi said that the collapse of Hamas's military ability to rule will open opportunities "for countries that want to see a governing alternative to Hamas in Gaza, with local leadership in Gaza, to join this process."

He explained that Gaza's new leadership will include Israel's Abraham Accords partners, the United States, the European Union and the United Nations, while the Israeli military continues "cleansing the area" of Hamas's presence. "We've been talking about this notion of 'the day after' for many months and the main thing that we've tried to emphasize throughout is that it's mainly the day after Hamas in the sense that we don't need to wait for it to disappear, because that process could take a long time." *—ANI*

UN tells Israel it will suspend aid operations across Gaza

WASHINGTON, 26 JUNE

Senior UN officials have warned Israel that they will suspend the aid operations across Gaza unless Israel acts urgently to better protect humanitarian workers, two UN officials said Tuesday. The ultimatum is the latest in a series of steps demanding Israel do more to safeguard operations from strikes and to curb growing lawlessness hindering humanitarian workers. *—PTI*

The ultimatum is the latest in a series of steps demanding Israel do more to safeguard operations from strikes***PHOTO: X/@ANTIWARCOM***

Indian-American couple jailed for forced labour

WASHINGTON, 26 JUNE

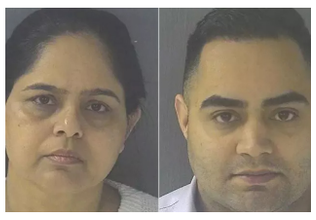


PHOTO: PTI

A US court has sentenced an Indian-American couple to prison for forcing their relative to work at their gas station and convenience store for over three years by bringing him to the United States on the pretext of helping enrol him in a school.

Harmanpreet Singh, 31, was sentenced to 11.25 years in prison and Kulbir Kaur, 43, to 7.25 years by the court that also asked them to pay the victim, his cousin, Rs 1.87 crores in restitution.

The couple has since divorced.

"The defendants exploited their relationship with the victim to lure him to the United States with false promises that they would help enrol him in school," Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division said. Singh and Kaur compelled the victim to work at the store, including cleaning, cooking, stocking and handling the cash register and store records, between 12 and 17 hours a day, nearly every day, for minimal pay, according to the evidence presented during the trial.

The couple left the victim at the store to sleep in a back office for days on multiple occasions, limited his access to food, refused to provide medical care or education, used surveillance equipment to monitor the victim both at the store and in their home, refused his requests to return to India and made him overstay his visa, according to the evidence. *—AP*

Suspected Houthi attacks target ship in Gulf of Aden

DUBAI, 26 JUNE

Suspected attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels early Wednesday targeted a ship in the Gulf of Aden, while a separate attack claimed by Iraqi militants allied with the rebels targeted the southern Israeli port city of Eilat, authorities said.

The attacks follow the departure of the USS Dwight D Eisenhower after an eight-month deployment in which the aircraft carrier led the American response to the Houthi assaults. Those attacks have reduced shipping drastically through the route crucial to Asian, Middle East and European markets in a campaign the Houthis say will continue as long as the Israel-Hamas war rages in the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, the Houthis faced allegations they seized commercial aircraft that brought back pilgrims from the Hajj amid a widening economic dispute between the rebels and the country's exiled government.

The ship attack happened off the coast of Aden, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) center said. *—AP*

Suspected N Korea missile explodes midair: South

SEOUL, 26 JUNE

A suspected hypersonic missile launched by North Korea exploded in flight on Wednesday, South Korea's military said, as North Korea protests the regional deployment of a US aircraft carrier for a military drill with South Korea and Japan.

Later Wednesday, South Korea conducted live-fire drills along its disputed western sea boundary with North Korea, its first since it suspended a 2018 agreement with the North aimed at reducing front-line military tensions in early June.

The North Korean missile was launched at about 5.30 am and was aimed toward the North's eastern waters before the failure, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said. Missile fragments were scattered in the water up to 250 km from the launch site near North Korea's capital, it said. No damage was immediately reported.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff said it believes the weapon was a solid-fuelled hypersonic missile. The launch generated more smoke than normal launches, possibly because of an engine fault, it told South Korean reporters at a background briefing. The contents of the briefing were shared with foreign media. In a three-way phone call, senior diplomats from South Korea, the US and Japan condemned the missile launch as a violation of UN resolutions. *—AP*

UK ELECTION BETTING SCANDAL ENGULFS OPPOSITIONN LABOUR PARTY

LONDON, 26 JUNE

The escalating scandal of candidates placing general election-related bets has widened from the British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak-led Conservative Party to engulf the Opposition Labour Party after its leader, Keir Starmer, suspended one of his candidates for betting against himself ahead of the 4 July polls.

Kevin Craig is running to become Labour's member of Parliament for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich in eastern England, considered a safe Conservative seat. It was previously held by Dan Poulter, who defected from the Tories to Labour ahead of the election before exiting politics.

On Tuesday, Craig took to social media to confirm his "huge mistake" of betting. As in the case of any suspended Tory MPs, the party symbol will appear beside his name in the ballot papers at this late stage in the campaign but he would be considered an Independent MP if elected. Meanwhile, he has said he will "comply fully" with a Gambling Commission's investigation into this bet and "will take the consequences of this stupid error of judgement on the chin." *—AP*

FOR CAMPAIGNING

Iran Prez candidates turn to social media

TEHRAN, 26 JUNE

After Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi was killed in a helicopter crash on 20 May, the Iranian government had to schedule an early election to choose a new president.

The regime has approved six presidential candidates to run in the election on June 28. The pool includes four hardliners, one centrist and one reformist. The main competition is expected to be between two hardliners and the reformist candidate. One of the hardliners is Saeed Jalili, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council from 2007 to 2013. He is likely to receive support among ideologically similar segments of society. The other hardliner, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, the current speaker of parliament, is also hoping to secure the votes of pro-regime supporters. There is some speculation that one of these candidates may withdraw in favour of the other.

Iranian government has social media because of the potential they could be used during protests to fuel greater unrest ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

The sole reformist candidate, Masoud Pezeshkian, currently an MP, is seeking to revive the social capital of the so-called reformist camp. Under former President Hassan Rouhani administration's from 2013 to 2021, reformists failed to fulfil their promises and gradually aligned themselves with the centre of power, where they remain. The more pressing issue will be the voter turnout. Recent parliamentary and presidential elections have seen less than 50 per cent voter turnout, the lowest it's ever been since the 1979 revolution. Iran's leaders have also faced multiple nationwide protests in recent years.

The Iranian government has blocked X, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp and Telegram because of the potential they could be used during protests to fuel greater unrest.

Most of these candidates have previously supported internet censorship, highlighting the paradox in their campaign strategies. For instance, in February, Jalili advocated for more stringent internet restrictions.

Yet, the campaigns are now strategically using social media to highlight issues likely to resonate with younger voters. *—The Conversation*

Rupee falls 17 paise to close at 83.60 against USD

MUMBAI, 26 JUNE

The rupee depreciated 17 paise against the US dollar and settled at 83.60 (provisional) on Wednesday, weighed down by the strength of the American currency in the overseas market and elevated crude oil prices. However, a firm trend in domestic equities, wherein benchmark indices scaled new peaks, supported the local unit and restricted the downslide, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.45 and hit the intraday high of 83.43 and a low of 83.61 against the greenback during the session. It finally settled at 83.60 (provisional) against the dollar, 17 paise lower than its previous close. On Tuesday, the rupee appreciated 4 paise and settled at 83.43 against the greenback.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on dollar demand ahead from oil importers," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. *—PTI*

Gold down ₹250/10gm; Silver tumbles ₹900

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Gold prices declined Rs 250 to Rs 72,300 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid fall in precious metal rates globally, according to HDFC Securities. The yellow metal had settled at Rs 72,550 per 10 grams in the previous session. Silver also tumbled Rs 900 to Rs 90,600 per kg. It had closed at Rs 91,500 per kg on Tuesday. "In Delhi markets, spot gold prices (24 carats) are trading at Rs 72,300 per 10 grams, down by Rs 250 from the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,316 per ounce, down USD 8 from the previous close. Gold came under pressure following the latest hawkish comments from a Federal Reserve policymaker, which dashed investors' hopes of an impending shift to monetary policy easing, Gandhi said. *—PTI*

ISA announces first ever International Solar Festival 2024

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

The International Solar Alliance (ISA) will host the first International Solar Festival in New Delhi on September 5-6, 2024, said Dr Ajay Mathur, Director General, ISA, at a distinguished gathering in the city, in the presence of Shri Bhupinder Singh Bhalla, Hon'ble Secretary, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE); Saina Nehwal, Ex-World Number 1 Badminton Player, Olympian, and Padma Bhushan Awardee; and Ms Arushi Sana, Official Youth Ambassador, COP28 UAE. The event was attended by representatives from the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy; and the diplomatic Missions of the ISA member countries, including Dominican Republic, the Syrian Arab Republic, Argentina, Israel, Uruguay, Denmark, Chile, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Republic of Guinea, Republic of Fiji, Bhutan, South Sudan, Spain, Senegal, Cuba, Ethiopia, and Costa Rica, among others. *—PTI*

Ambuja Cements, Ravi Sanghi to sell 3.52% stake

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Adani group firm Ambuja Cements and Ravi Sanghi, the promoters of Sanghi Industries, will sell 3.52 per cent stake in the Saurashtra-based cement manufacturer. The Offer-for-Sale (OFS) will open on Wednesday for non-retail investors and on Thursday for retail investors, Sanghi Industries said in a regulatory filing on Tuesday evening. "Ambuja Cements and Ravi Sanghi (the seller/promoters) propose to sell up to 90,92,000 equity shares of Sanghi Industries representing 3.52 per cent of the total issued and paid up equity share capital of the company," it said. *—PTI*

Sensex-Nifty hit all-time high as session closes in green

Sensex closed at 78,572.43 and Nifty at 120.60 points

MUMBAI, 26 JUNE

Indian benchmark indices reached fresh record highs on Wednesday, driven by gains in banking and media stocks.

Sensex closed at 78,572.43, up 518.91 points and Nifty 120.60 points high closing at 23,868.80 after the close of the market on June 26. The BSE Sensex soared to an all-time high of 78,759.40, closing at 78,674.25 with an increase of 620.72 points or 0.80 per cent.

Concurrently, the NSE Nifty 50 climbed 147.50 points or 0.62 per cent to settle at 23,868.80, having hit a record high of 23,889.90 during the session. Leading the gains on the NSE Nifty 50 were Reliance Industries, Bharti Airtel, UltraTech Cement, ICICI Bank, and Grasim. Conversely, Apollo Hospitals, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bajaj Auto, Tata Steel, and Hindalco Industries emerged as the top laggards.

Reliance Industries set a new record high, while Bharti Airtel surged over 3 per cent, marking significant large-cap gains on the major indices. The broader markets displayed mixed performance with the Nifty SmallCap rising by 0.11 per cent and the MidCap slightly declining by 0.05 per cent. Sector-wise, the Nifty Media rose by 1.7 per cent, Nifty Bank by 0.5 per cent, and Nifty FMCG by 0.4 per cent. The Metal sector remained the top loser, dropping over 1.39 per cent.

The NSE Nifty 50 climbed 147.50 points or 0.62 per cent to settle at 23,868.80, having hit a record high of 23,889.90 during session ***PHOTO: ANI***

- Sensex closed at 78,572.43, up 518.91 points and Nifty 120.60 points high closing at 23,868.80 after the close of the market on June 26. The BSE Sensex soared to an all-time high of 78,759.40, closing at 78,674.25 with an increase of 620.72 points or 0.80 per cent.

Among the sectoral indices, Nifty Bank, Financial Services, FMCG, Media, Pharma, PSU Banks, Private Banks and Oil and Gas remains in the green territory. The stock of sectors such as Consumer durables, Midsmall healthcare,Realty, Metal and IT ended in the green. Foreign investors made a substantial move by buying Indian equities, while domestic investors showed differing market sentiment by selling shares.

"Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) sustained their buying streak for the 12th consecutive session, acquiring USD 141 million worth of shares on Tuesday. Since June 7, FPIs have invested a total of USD 3.7 billion in Indian equities, buoyed by reduced policy uncertainty. Domestic institutional investors (DIIs) have also been active, purchasing USD 1.6 billion worth of shares in the same period," Varun Aggarwal MD, Profit Idea.

"Gold and silver prices are declining due to the Federal Reserve's aggressive stance on maintaining higher interest rates, which increases US Treasury bond yields and limits precious metal gains. However, geopolitical tensions between Israel and Lebanon are supporting safe-haven demand," he

'NO MANIPULATION'

Govt probe clears Byju's of fraud: 'Failed investors'

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

An India government investigation found lapses in the corporate governance of Byju's, but cleared the struggling online-education startup of financial fraud.

The yearlong probe by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs found no evidence of wrongdoing such as siphoning of funds or manipulation of financial accounts, people familiar with the matter said. Still, it discovered governance shortcomings that contributed to the startup's mounting losses, the people said, asking not to be named as the investigators' report isn't public yet.

The findings offer some support for once-celebrated founder Byju Raveendran, who's been accused of mismanagement by disgruntled investors. Three shareholders including Prosus Ventures and Peak XV Partners, formerly Sequoia Capital India, left the board of Byju's last year over differences with Raveendran on issues such as business processes and internal controls. The report also ends, at least temporarily, the possibility of any new scrutiny on the company by Indian officials on issues already probed.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Representatives of the corporate affairs ministry, Byju's, Peak XV and Prosus didn't respond to requests for comment. The report doesn't directly address whether Raveendran personally is at fault for the governance lapses or whether he is qualified to run the company. The disgruntled investors have sought his removal, citing management and compliance failures.

The report also does little to stave off the company's broader problems. The unprofitable startup's quick expansion led to a cash crunch and a plunge in its valuation, and it's now fighting multiple lawsuits in India and the US. *—PTI*

SBI raises Rs 10,000 cr via bonds for infra projects

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

State Bank of India (SBI) on Wednesday raised Rs 10,000 crore through its fifth infrastructure bond issuance.

The country's largest lender raised the funds at a coupon rate of 7.36 per cent. The issue attracted overwhelming response from investors with bids in excess of Rs 19,884 crore and was oversubscribed by around four times against the base issue size of Rs 5,000 crore, SBI said in a regulatory filing.

The total number of bids received was 143, indicating wider participation with heterogeneity of bids, it said. The investors were across provident funds, pension funds, insurance companies, mutual funds, corporates etc, it said.

The proceeds of bonds will be utilised in enhancing long-term resources for funding infrastructure and affordable housing segments, it said. "Based on the response, the bank has decided to accept Rs 10,000 crore at a coupon rate of 7.36 per cent payable annually. This represents a spread of 21 bps over the corresponding FBIL G-Sec par curve," it said.

PHOTO: PTI

With the current issuance, the total outstanding long-term bonds issued by the Bank is at Rs 49,718 crore. This issuance is also very significant as the Bank has been successful in raising long-duration bonds successively.

SBI Chairman Dinesh Khara said that this issuance will help in developing a long-term bond curve and encourage other banks to issue bonds of longer tenor.

—PTI

5 ROUNDS OF BIDDING

Spectrum auction ends on day 2 with bids worth ₹11,340 cr

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

An auction of radiowaves that carry voice and data signals for mobile phones ended within two days on Wednesday, garnering less than 12 per cent of the Rs 96,238 crore minimum value that the government had estimated for the spectrum on offer.

The auction, where a total of 10 GHz of spectrum ranging between 800 MHz to 26 GHz was offered, got total bids worth Rs 11,340 crore, sources with knowledge of the matter said. Five rounds of bidding happened on the opening day on 25 June, but Wednesday did not see much action, leading to officials declaring the end of the auction at around 1130 hrs.

The total bids received is more or less the same, as what came in on Tuesday, sources said, adding only 140-150 MHz are estimated to have been sold.

PHOTO: IMAGE FOR REPRESENTATION

On offer were radiowaves in the bands of -- 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1,800 MHz, 2,100 MHz, 2,300 MHz, 2,500 MHz, 3,300 MHz and 26 GHz. During the last auction in 2022, which turned out to be a seven-day affair, a record over Rs 1.5 lakh crore worth of 5G telecom spectrum was sold, with billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Jio emerging as the top bidder, cornering nearly half of all the airwaves (worth Rs 88,078 crore). At that time, telecom tycoon Sunil Mittal's Bharti Airtel made a successful bid of Rs 43,084 crore, while Vodafone Idea bought Spectrum for Rs 18,799 crore.

—PTI

Aditya Grp to invest $50 M in new unit, R&D centre in Texas

WASHINGTON, 26 JUNE

Aditya Birla Group has announced an investment of USD 50 million in a manufacturing and research and development (R&D) centre in Texas.

Aditya Birla Group's Vice President of Sales and Marketing Scott Bastion said the company will be making a USD 50-million investment outside of Houston in the city of Beaumont, Texas, where it will produce epoxy resins -- that are used in a variety of consumer and industrial products. "In that site, we will have an application development centre and will house an R&D team. We look forward to commissioning that site in the next 15 to 20 months. "In addition to that, we look forward to bringing greener solutions, sustainable solutions, and more importantly, being able to serve as well as expand the global footprint of our epoxy business," Bastion said. Aditya Group already has a foundation in India, Thailand and in Europe. *—PTI*

NEW TAX REGIME

Budget should raise basic exemption to ₹3.5L: EY

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

The government should double standard deduction under the new concessional tax regime to Rs 1 lakh or increase the basic exemption limit to Rs 3.5 lakh in the upcoming Budget, tax and consultancy firm EY said.

Listing out the priorities on taxation reforms in the upcoming Budget, EY said the government should prioritise streamlining tax structures, enhancing policy frameworks to promote economic growth, and fostering a conducive environment for investment and development.

EY also suggested that stability in corporate tax rates be maintained, TDS provision rationalised as well as streamlining dispute resolution as possible areas for consideration in the Budget to be tabled in Parliament next month. On the personal tax front, the concessional tax regime without exemptions/ deductions should continue, it said.

EY also suggested that stability in corporate tax rates be maintained
PHOTO: PIXABAY

To make it more attractive, the standard deduction under concessional tax regime may be increased to Rs 1 lakh instead of existing deduction of Rs 50,000 or the basic exemption limit may be increased from Rs 3 lakh to Rs 3.5 lakh, EY said, listing out the policy priorities before the new government.

Under the current tax system, taxpayers can choose between the old regime, which offers various exemptions and deductions, and the new concessional regime, providing lower rates and Rs 50,000 standard deduction but no exemptions.

EY said the government has taken many welcome initiatives to improve the technology and data-driven tax compliance processes like pre-filled returns, Annual Information Statement, ease of tax payments, faster processing of returns and refunds, etc, resulting in higher voluntary tax compliance. *—PTI*

Britannia not leaving WB: Govt amid suspense

KOLKATA, 26 JUNE

The West Bengal government, on Tuesday, made it clear that Britannia Industries Limited, a major FMCG brand, has no plans to exit the state and that the company is "fully committed" to West Bengal.

Amit Mitra, Principal Chief Advisor to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, issued this statement on behalf of the state government following a political row over the shutdown of Britannia's Taratala plant. At a press conference held at the State Secretariat, in Nabanna, Mitra said he spoke with the Managing Director of Britannia Industries, Varun Berry, who assured him that the company was "fully committed" to West Bengal.

"There's a complete falsehood being stated not only on social media but also in some mainstream media that Britannia has run away from the state. The Managing Director of Britannia called and said that they are fully committed to West Bengal. They are producing between Rs 1,000-1,200 crore worth of products in the state, which will continue," said Amit Mitra. On 24 June, in-charge of BJP's National Information & Technology Dept, Amit Malviya, posted on X about the shutdown of Britannia Industries' factory. *—ANI*

PHOTO: BRITANIA

Gender minorities to comprise 25% of Tata Steel workforce

JAMSHEDPUR, 26 JUNE

Tata Steel aims at having a minimum of 25 per cent of its workforce made up of diverse groups, including gender minorities, marginalised communities, persons with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ individuals, within the next few years, a company official said.

It is one of the first companies in the country to roll out a special recruitment drive for transgender talent, having recruited over 100 members from the community for various roles across different locations, the official claimed.

A total of 113 transgender individuals have been onboarded and posted at various locations, including manufacturing, operations and maintenance, mining, and services. These employees are stationed in Noamundi, West Bokaro, Kolkata, Kharagpur, Kalinganagar, and Jamshedpur. Some of these employees work all three shifts and operate Heavy Earth Moving Machinery (HEMM) at the Noamundi iron ore mine in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum and West Bokaro coal mine in Ramgarh district. "Tata Steel appreciates the potential of diversity, equity and inclusion," official said.

"In line with this, we renewed our commitment and refocused our approach to DE&I in 2015 by setting up MOSAIC - a platform for pioneering initiatives, diversity targets, and employee-friendly policies conceptualised and executed from the apex level," he added. *—PTI*

NOW IN BRAZIL

Bajaj Auto expands to 100th country

MUMBAI, 26 JUNE

Bajaj Auto on Wednesday announced the inauguration of a new production facility in Brazil, which will initially focus on the sourcing, assembly, and testing of Dominar models, with plans to expand to additional product lines.

Set up in the Northeastern city of Manaus in 9,600 sq meters of space and equipped with engine and vehicle assembly as well as testing facilities, the plant has a production capacity of 20,000 units per year on a single shift, Bajaj said.

Bajaj Auto commenced work on the new manufacturing plant in June last year and the facility became production-ready within a year, it said. With the opening of the Brazil plant, Bajaj Auto said, it now sells its vehicles in 100 countries.

The Manaus plant in Brazil has been designed with advanced, automated production lines
PHOTO: BAJAJ AUTO

"With the establishment of our own plant in Brazil, we have achieved a quantum shift in our local capability to fulfil demand. Our Dominar brand has received an outstanding reception since its launch 18 months ago. "The new manufacturing capabilities will enable us to build a wider distribution network, introduce new products and meet growing expectations of our customers,' said Rakesh Sharma, Executive Director at Bajaj Auto Ltd.

The Manaus plant has been designed with advanced, automated production lines and integrated quality control systems with multiple conveyor and transfer systems seamlessly connecting to various stages of manufacturing, Bajaj Auto said.

"Bajaj do Brasil has provided for plans to expand the facility further in due course to accommodate additional production capacity to up to 50,000 units per year. It has also integrated local suppliers and begun sourcing key motorcycle parts and components from within Manaus," the company said. *—PTI*

EURO 2024

England top Group but fail to score in draw, Slovenia to knockouts

Denmark advanced to the last 16 after a 0-0 draw with Serbia

GEORGETOWN, 26 JUNE

England topped Group C at Euro 2024 after a goalless draw with Slovenia which will do little to quell the question marks shrouding Gareth Southgate's team.

Bukayo Saka had a goal disallowed in a stale first half - after Phil Foden was offside before crossing him the ball - but such openings were rare and it took until the 30th minute for England to even register a shot on goal.

The introduction of Kobbie Mainoo at the interval, in place of Conor Gallagher, did bring a little more speed to England's passing, but they still lacked urgency and could not break down a disciplined and diligent Slovenia team, who knew a point would be enough to take them through to the knockout rounds.

Slovenia dug in for that draw towards the end, rather than pushing for what would have been a first-ever win at a European Championship, making England's task even harder. Substitute Cole Palmer did have a good chance in added time, but shot too close to the goalkeeper.

England's last-16 opponents are yet to be confirmed, with the Netherlands a possibility. England are however now on the opposite side of the draw to Germany, Spain, Portugal, and France, so cannot meet any of those sides until the final.

England team members congratulate each other after topping Group C and Andreas Christensen; Kasper Dolberg and teammates react after a Group C match between Denmark and Serbia **PHOTO: X / @EURO2024**

Gallagher replaced Trent Alexander-Arnold in England's only change, but it did not have the desired effect. England moved the ball slowly and none of Gallagher, Declan Rice, and Jude Bellingham were able to dictate the flow of the game.

Denmark advanced to the last 16 at after a 0-0 draw with Serbia

Denmark advanced to the last 16 at the European Championship after a gritty 0-0 draw with Serbia on Tuesday.

"Playing against Germany here with the Danish team, it can't be better, can't wait," Denmark coach Kasper Hjulmand said. "It's a great team but we're a great team as well. And when we play big the big nations, we always step up."

The Danes finished Group C with three points, the same as Slovenia, but ended up in second place because of a better disciplinary record. Slovenia, which drew 0-0 with group-winner England, also advanced to the knockout stage at Euro 2024.

Denmark had most of the chances even though Serbia needed a victory to reach the next round. And almost all of those Danish opportunities came through Christian Eriksen, who was making a record 133rd appearance for his country.

Denmark and Slovenia finished even on points, goal difference and goals scored. There were also six yellow cards apiece for the players for both teams. But Denmark had a better disciplinary record after Slovenia assistant coach Milivoje Novakovic received a yellow card in his side's opening match against Denmark.

Serbia finished just a point behind.

"We're disappointed because of the result. We haven't been able to make the step that was lacking," Serbia coach Dragan Stojkovic said. "We were looking for this one opportunity, one goal, but unfortunately we didn't succeed.

—AP

Canada beat Peru 1-0 at Copa America

KANSAS CITY, 26 JUNE

Jonathan David scored in the 74th minute as Canada beat Peru 1-0 in the Copa America for their first victory over a South American opponent in 24 years.

Peru played a man short after Miguel Araujo was given a red card in the 59th minute for a studs-up tackle on Jacob Shaffelburg, a call made after a video review.

Canada got their first win in four matches under Jesse Marsch, the American hired as coach last month, and beat a South American team for the first time since a 2-0 victory over Colombia in the 2000 CONCACAF Gold Cup final.

David's goal, his 27th for Canada, ended the national team's 391-minute scoreless streak. Twenty-six of his goals have come in competitive matches.

Canada goalkeeper Maxime Crepeau made a diving save in second-half stoppage time, then punched away a free kick.

Argentina beat Chile 1-0, enter quarterfinals

Lautaro Martinez scored off a rebound in the 88th minute, giving defending champion Argentina and Lionel Messi a 1-0 victory over Chile that guaranteed them a berth in the Copa America quarterfinals.

Messi's corner kick led to a shot blocked by goalkeeper Claudio Bravo, and Martínez scored his second goal of the tournament on Argentina's 21st shot of the match.

Players stood and waited for three minutes while the goal, Martínez's 26th for the national team, was confirmed in a video review.

Argentina leads Group A with six points, followed by Canada with six, and Chile and Peru with one each. On Saturday, the Albiceleste finishes the first round against Peru at Miami Gardens. *—AP*

Canada beat Peru 1-0 and Argentina beat Chile 1-0 **PHOTO: @COPAAMERICA**

PHOTO: PTI

Minaur and Ajla to lead Australia in Paris Olympics

PARIS, 26 JUNE

Alex de Minaur is set to make his Olympic debut in Paris three years after being forced out of the Tokyo Games because of Covid-19. Ninth-ranked de Minaur was among the nine tennis players chosen Wednesday for Australia's Olympic team. Ajla Tomljanovic will be the only Australian in the women's singles draw in Paris. "Last time round I got a little bit unlucky to not be able to play in Tokyo, but I've had my eyes set on Paris and I am super excited to now be officially part of this team," de Minaur, who has nine career ATP titles, said. *—AP*

PHOTO: PTI

Wasim appointed as Pakistan cricket women's team coach

KARACHI, 26 JUNE

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has named former middle-order batsman and chief selector Muhammad Wasim as the head coach of the women's team for the Asia Cup in July. Wasim, who was the chief selector during Ramiz Raja's tenure as the PCB Chairman, will be assisted by former Test bowlers Junaid Khan and Abdul Rehman, who have been appointed as the bowling and assistant coaches.*—AP*

Swimmers Srihari and Dhinidhi to compete at Olympics

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Srihari Nataraj and Dhinidhi Desinghu will compete at the Paris Olympics via the Universality places qualification system, which allows countries to recommend their two highest-ranked swimmers for the showpiece if none cuts through the regulation process. "No Indian swimmer achieved the direct qualification.*—PTI*

T20 WORLD CUP

India eyes revenge against England in semis

GEORGETOWN, 26 JUNE

With a refreshingly aggressive batting approach, India would look to avoid the knockout stage jitters plaguing them for over a decade when they take on defending champions England in the semifinals of the T20 World Cup here on Thursday.

The last time these two teams met at this stage, it turned out to be a no contest as England outplayed an outdated India in the 2022 edition's semifinal. On paper, Rohit Sharma and his men look the stronger bunch for the conditions expected at the Providence Stadium and look primed for revenge. Rohit has already made it clear that he intends to go ballistic in the powerplays without a care for personal milestones, which was evident in the game against Australia. India is likely to go unchanged into the game even though they have Yuzvendra Chahal in the squad who can come in handy against England's right-handers including Phil Salt, Jos Buttler, Harry Brook, and Jonny Bairstow.

India vs England match starts at 8 pm IST

India will take on England **PHOTO: X / @T20WORLDCUP**

SA, Afghanistan look to seal final berth

Tournament story-makers Afghanistan will be up against perennial dark horses South Africa in the first semifinal of the T20 World Cup here, a much-anticipated showdown that will be historic irrespective of the outcome.

Without belittling the poised run of the Proteas, Afghanistan has been the revelation of this ICC showpiece. They found life and fighting spirit to rise above the ravages of war back in their country, best exemplified by an astounding win over 2021 winners Australia, whom they had never beaten before.

If Afghanistan too can keep their heartbeats in check, a classic for the ages seems well on the cards.

South Africa vs Afghanistan match starts at 6 am IST. *—AP*

South Africa will take on Afghanistan **PHOTO: X / @T20WORLDCUP**

ICC's rule on fake injury

According to ICC's Code of Conduct, 'time-wasting' is deemed a level 1 or 2 offense under Article 2.10.7. For Level 1 offense, the maximum punishment is a 100% match-fee fine and two suspension points. If a player is given four suspension points in one year, may be banned for either one Test match or two ODIs or T20Is. So, can Naib be banned if he was faking an injury?

Gulbadin Naib **PHOTO: X / @T20WORLDCUP**

WOMEN'S ONE-OFF TEST

Indian players during a practice session ahead of cricket match against South Africa, at MA Chidambaram Stadium, in Chennai on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Travis Head replaces SKY as top T20 batter

DUBAI, 26 JUNE

Australia opener Travis Head on Wednesday toppled India's Suryakumar Yadav as the number one batter in the latest ICC T20 rankings.

Suryakumar has held the number one spot since December 2023 but Head's splendid run at the T20 World Cup catapulted him to the top even as his team was knocked out. Head scored 255 runs with two half-centuries, including a 76 against India in a Super Eight contest.

The Australian is two points ahead of Suryakumar (842 points) who dropped a spot to second. However, he has a chance to reclaim the numero uno position as India's campaign at the T20 World Cup is still alive.

England's Phil Salt and the Pakistan duo of Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan round up the top 5 batters.

Travis Head **PHOTO: X / @T20WORLDCUP**

West Indies' Johnson Charles is the only new arrival into the top 10, up by four spots, with Afghanistan star Rahmanullah Gurbaz a place lower after going up five spots.

Indian pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah jumped a whopping 44 places to zoom to the 24th spot while spinner Kuldeep Yadav has also climbed 20 places to be just outside the top 10 at 11th.*—AP*

Eight Indians enter Asian Junior squash quarters

ISLAMABAD, 26 JUNE

Yusha Nafees, along with seven other Indians in various age groups, moved into the quarterfinals of the Asian Junior Individual Squash Championships here on Wednesday.

Sixth-seeded Nafees beat Iranian Md Saleh Akhani 11-7, 11-5, 11-6 in the boys' U-17 second round, while second seed Shiven Agarwal defeated local challenger Rayyan Bahadur 11-9, 11-1, 11-5 in the boys' U-15 category. Other second-round results (Indians only): Boys U-13: Dhruv Bopana lost to Huzaifa Shahid (Pak) 9-11, 9-11, 4-11. Girls U-13: 4-Goushika M bt Maliha Shah (Pak) 11-3, 11-3, 11-3; 2-Aadya Budhia bt Sadia Zahoor Khan (Pak) 11-2, 11-6, 11-1. *—AP*

NEW INNINGS

Kapil elected prez of Professional Golf Tour

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

World Cup-winning former India cricket captain Kapil Dev has taken over as the new President of the Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI), an elevation that marks a fresh beginning for the iconic player who also excelled as an amateur golfer.

The 65-year-old, who was already a member of the PGTI Board as its Vice President, was chosen unanimously and would be taking over from incumbent H R Srinivasan, whose tenure has come to an end. Kapil is known to be a keen golfer, whose handicap was almost down to scratch at one time.

"It is an honor to become the President of PGTI, an organization with which I have now been associated for quite a few years. It is a player body, and I am great friends with all of them and with whom I often play," Kapil said in his new position. Kapil, who once nurtured dreams of representing India at the Asian Games when it was still open only to amateurs, also said that golf has been his passion for more than three decades.

"...and now it is the sport where I spend most of my time. I have been a vice-President and I am on the Board, so it's an honor to be chosen by the players to be the President.

65-year-old Cricket legend Kapil Dev takes over as president of Professional Golf Tour of India **PHOTO: IANS**

- The 65-year-old, who was already a member of the PGTI Board as its Vice President, was chosen unanimously and would be taking over from incumbent H R Srinivasan, whose tenure has come to an end.

I promise to do my best as I always have. "What gives me even greater pleasure is that I will be able to spend more time with my golfing friends and play a little more," he added. Kapil has been at the forefront of trying to get new sponsors for PGTI and brought in one of the most lucrative events to the Tour, namely the Kapil Dev Grant Thornton Invitational at the DLF Golf and Country Club, with a purse of Rs 2 crore (approx. USD 240,000). *—PTI*

Lost faith in WADA: Olympic gold winners

WASHINGTON, 26 JUNE

The USA Olympic athletes have lost faith in the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) to rid their sports of cheaters ahead of next month's Paris Olympics, two former gold medalists told a House subcommittee.

The testimony by Michael Phelps and Allison Schmitt followed revelations this spring that 23 Chinese swimmers had tested positive for a banned heart medication ahead of the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 but were allowed by WADA to compete. Five of those swimmers went on to win medals, including three golds.

Phelps is the most decorated swimmer in history and a 23-time Olympic gold medalist. Schmitt, a four-time gold medalist, was part of the US 800-meter freestyle relay team that finished a close second to China at the Tokyo Games. Both the Chinese and U.S. teams broke the previous world record in the relay.

Michael Phelps **PHOTO: PTI**

"We raced hard. We trained hard. We followed every protocol. We accepted our defeat with grace," Schmitt said. "Many of us will be haunted by this podium finish that may have been impacted by doping."

—AP